Salute to Joe Kubert

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

No. 92
July 2002

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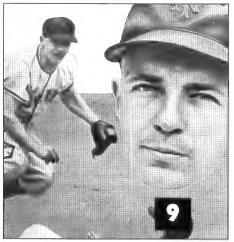

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Issue Number 92, July 2002

Robert Kanigher

The man who put Sergeant Rock in a hard place

1915-2002

by Paul Gravett

Robert Kanigher, writer and editor, was born June 18, 1915; died May 6, 2002.

America's most famous comic book soldier is Sergeant Rock, the hard-nosed yet goodhearted commander of Easy Company, a troop of men fighting, and not always winning, in second-world-war Europe. Rock was the greatest creation of Robert Kanigher, who has died at age 86. He defined him—with artist and long-term collaborator Joe Kubert—in a 1959 story, in which a rookie asks why the sarge is called Rock. A grizzled vet explains, " 'Cause when the goin' gets so rugged that only a rock could stand, he stands."

Kanigher was one of the most versatile and controversial authors in comic books. He spent almost his entire career, which spanned five decades and numerous genres, working for DC Comics in New York. He scripted and created many of their most enduring characters, devoting 20 years to Wonder Woman, and 30 to Sergeant Rock. His war comics were the sources for nearly all of Roy Lichtenstein's pop art of war, notably his 1963 painting, *Whaam!*

Born in New York, Kanigher was selling short stories and poetry in his teens. In 1932, he won the *New York Times* collegiate short-story competition, and went on to write and direct stage plays and radio shows, including *House Of Mystery* and *Cavalcade Of America*.

From 1940, he branched out into the burgeoning comic book market, where superheroes fought the Germans and the Japanese—"all in color for a dime." He scripted the exploits of Blue Beetle, Steel Sterling, The Web, Captain Marvel and others. In 1943, he wrote the best-selling *How To Make Money Writing For Comics*, the first guide of its kind. In 1946, Kanigher was hired by Sheldon Mayer, editor at All-American Comics—as one half of DC was then known—who first assigned him to Black Canary, Flash, Green Lantern, Hawkman and the Justice Society of America. The following year brought the death of psychologist William Moulton Marston, the inventor of the lie-detector and creator and writer of Wonder Woman. Mayer was keen to return to his drawing, so he groomed Kanigher to replace him as editor on the character, which Kanigher accepted in 1948, on condition that he was also appointed as writer. With this exceptional editorial freedom he tried various approaches to update the Amazon princess, from love stories to Hollywood glamour, with mixed results. A fresh start came in 1958 with his new art team, penciler Ross Andru and inker Mike Esposito, and his additions of a teenage Wonder Girl, a baby Wonder Tot and some increasingly bizarre boyfriends and villains.

By the time he left, in 1968, Kanigher had steered Wonder Woman, sometimes erratically, through two decades as the only superheroine to star in her own comic book since 1941.

Having won the Second World War, these superheroes had lost their relevance by the late 1940s, and most had vanished. In 1956, Kanigher devised the origin for a trial revival of DC's Flash, now thoroughly modernized. His imaginative first script and cover design, drawn by Carmine Infantino, proved hugely popular and ushered in a new age of superheroes. Kanigher wrote fast and furious, and claimed to have scripted at least two stories a week for 40 years.

[continued on page 4]

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

It's just a few days since we put *CBM* #91 into the mail, and already we are in the final stages of getting #92 to the printer! This monthly schedule is relentless! For those of you who notice such things, *CBM* #91 was dated May 2002 and this issue, #92, is cover dated July 2002. We skipped a June date (but not an issue) to catch up. We are finally approaching the point of being able to get a new issue out every four to five weeks. As with any new project, we are still on the learning curve, but all in all, I am proud of the issues we have published so far, and we hope to keep improving with each issue.

The legendary Joe Kubert is the focus of this issue. While he is most famous for the DC characters Sgt. Rock and Viking Prince, and for creating the world's first and only school for budding comic creators, Joe has done work for virtually every publisher in the business, including EC. Once again we have Michael Kronenberg designing and laying out this major feature, and I know you will enjoy the creativity he brings to these layouts.

I am delighted to report a new development in the ongoing dialogue regarding CGC, "slabbing" comic books, restoration, grading, etc. We have devoted considerable space to letters from fans both pro and con, and we feel that this is an important issue for all comic book collectors nowadays. So *CBM* has offered to launch a new monthly feature called "Ask CGC," a question-and-answer column devoted to this timely topic. Each month, we will submit a list of questions from our readers to CGC, and those questions and CGC's answers will appear in these pages, starting with the next issue of CBM. It won't help the dialogue for people to write and say, "I hate slabbing!" or "Collectors who buy slabbed comics are pinheads!"; these are individual opinions, and while we agree that everyone is entitled to his/her opinion, comments like this will not help the discussion. But if you will send your specific questions on matters of detecting restoration, grading standards, etc., we will forward them to CGC for an answer. So send your CGC questions to **russcochran@townsqr.com**, or mail them to *CBM*.

Russ

[continued from page 3]

Over a single weekend to meet a deadline, he came up with the Metal Men concept, a sextet of humanized robots, each built from a different metal that defined their power and personality. Among his many idiosyncratic creations were plucky canine Rex, the Wonder Dog; underwater team Sea Devils; sharp-shooting cowboy Johnny Thunder; ghetto champion Ragman and the oddest couple, Angel and the Ape.

Most of all, though, Kanigher will be remembered for his war comics. He was very much a hands-on editor, laying out every cover and revising every script for *Our Army at War*, *Star Spangled War Stories*, *All-American Men of War*, *Our Fighting Forces* and *G.I. Combat*. Launched during the Korean War, these showed the Second World War being fought not by super-heroes but by real people. Kanigher was chief writer and creator, and often instilled his leading men—and women—with a gritty naturalism and an emotional charge.

Among the roster of recurring characters he developed from the late-1950s were the Navajo flying ace Johnny Cloud, the beautiful French resistance leader Mademoiselle Marie and Captain Storm, the PT boat skipper with a wooden leg.

In 1965, Kanigher introduced the first comics telling the story from the other side, narrated by Enemy Ace, a German first-world-war pilot with a strict code of honor. A year later, he sent Captain Hunter in search of his brother to the Vietnam War, a drama that proved too realistic and was quietly dropped. In contrast, there was War That Time Forgot, stranding GIs on an island of dinosaurs.

Kanigher is survived by his son Evan and daughter Jan.

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MARKETPLACE MAIL

Hello! I'm an Italian comic fan and I read with pleasure every issue of *CBM*. I've two questions for you. 1) Why do so few characters or stories of pirates exist in comic strips and comic books compared with other genres (sci-fi, jungle, western, horror, humor, soap, and so on)? 2) Why does nobody reprint Foster's *Prince Valiant* in great size and black and white so to admire his powerful art and genius? Thank you for all.

Bruno Caporlingua
Catania, Italy

Ciao, Bruno! I am happy to know that CBM *is read in Italy, and that you are enjoying what we are doing! You ask two very good questions, and I think the answer to the first is that the people who created comic book stories and titles were very heavily influenced by the movies of the day. There were scores of movies in the genres of sci-fi, jungle, western, horror, etc, but relatively few devoted to pirate stories. At least that's my opinion...anyone out there care to comment on this? And I have the same attitude as you on the Prince Valiant question. I would love to see a series of large reprint books done from a set of black and white proofs, similar to the Rick Norwood (Manuscript Press) color versions. Rick has published the years 1937, 1938, and 1939 in full size facsimile editions, in color. This makes them so expensive to publish that he has stopped there. Personally, I'd rather see them in black and white and large size. Fantagraphics has published a smaller color version, which is very nice for what it is, but sometimes the color is too heavy and obscures Foster's wonderful inking. Rick Norwood, if you're listening, why not continue your series of full size saddle-stitched reprints, but in black and white? It would be a lot cheaper to do, and represents a "purer" form of Foster's creation, in my humble opinion.*

I guess I'm a pinhead.

At least that's how Greg White referred to those of us who collect comics that have been certified by CGC in his market report in the April issue. Now, let me explain how it was the same Greg White that MADE me a pinhead.

At the 2000 ComiCon International in San Diego, I purchased a beautiful high-grade book from Mr. White that he assured me was unrestored. I submitted the book to CGC at the convention that same day. When I received it back a few weeks later, they had certified it as restored.

I phoned Mr. White to request that he take the book back. He refused to believe that CGC was correct in certifying it as restored, and declined to take the book back or do anything to make up for the dramatic difference between what I paid him for the book and it's current market value as restored. He went on to rant and rave about "a conspiracy" between CGC and our hobby's major dealers to artificially inflate the price of comics, and chastised me for having the book certified in the first place. When I explained to him that the part of CGC's certification service that was of most value to me was the restoration check, a service that had he used on this book prior to selling it would have prevented this unfortunate incident, he hung up on me.

Since then I've become a pinhead. I don't buy ANY gold or silver age books unless they've been certified, all thanks to Greg White. And Greg, if you're reading this, don't assume that just because I get a book certified, that I don't ever remove it from its plastic case and read it. The price of CGC certification is a great value for the restoration check alone, and YOU taught me that.

Pinheads of the world unite!

Jeff Delaney
nearmint@aol.com

What a great issue!

The special Hal Foster issue of *Comic Book Marketplace* is truly a joy to behold. The masters of the adventure strip have seemingly been forgotten in recent years so I was delighted to see so much space devoted to one of the all-time greatest. I hope we'll see similar issues in the future about Caniff and others.

Wayne DeWald

Thanks, Wayne! You will be happy to know that CBM *#93 will feature the wonderful work of Alex Raymond, and in* CBM *#96 we throw the spotlight on Milton Caniff. What I am trying to do with* CBM *is to feature these giants of newspaper strip art without losing the emphasis on comic books and comic book artists. Foster, Raymond, and Caniff have often been referred to as the three giants of newspaper adventure strip art, so I'd like to ask our readers to nominate other artists in this category for features.*

I just had to make a few comments after reading Michelle Nolan's "Notebook" in *CBM* #90 that mentioned *Super-American* and *Captain Fight*. I guess I can count myself lucky in that I have those issues of *Fight* (#'s 15-18). In fact, I finally found #18 last summer while in San Diego. I have to agree with her that those issues are scarce and getting harder to find in any condition. Sometimes, I believe, the Gerber Scarcity Index should rate those books a little rarer.

Those characters were such oddities in that they had such short shelf lives. I think, at that time, that Fiction House, just like many other publishers, was just trying to find characters and stories that appealed to the readers and were trying almost anything and everything. *Fight* is such a great title. After I found one of those *Super-American* issues, I had to find the others. Thank goodness that there weren't that many to find and the search wasn't overly difficult.

And not too long after those characters disappeared, the country's patriotism was in full swing, which made Super-American a little ahead of his time. Of course, Captain America also appeared before the official entry of the U.S. into World War II. It just shows that the publishers were aware of events happening elsewhere in the world at that time.

I appreciate Michelle writing about those characters in those four issues of *Fight*. I'm glad to have them in my collection because now, after being featured in her column, some people are going to want them in theirs. What few copies are around will probably be snatched up! They're worth finding and adding to any collection.

Steven Fears
GSFears@aol.com

Hi! I love *CBM* in all of its various incarnations, although being something of a Marvel Zombie, I find that some issues don't have enough of "my stuff" to warrant a purchase. Hence I have not subscribed and rely on the somewhat dicey situation of hoping to catch it in whichever comics shops I happen to visit. Hence, I just today located a copy of #84. Very nice issue (although I understand you had relatively little to do with it.)

One bummer was that the Gray Morrow article had virtually no captions for the illustrations. (Another bummer is that he must have died right around the time the article was published.) I was particularly struck by the little picture on page 15. The woman with the blank eyes (and indeed Morrow's signature itself) are almost identical to those seen in what are my favorites among his work: the covers to the Frankenstein Horror Series. These were horror novels (covering various subjects, not just Frankenstein) that were published in the early 1970s and advertised in the back of the Warren magazines. Great, lurid titles like *Ghoul Lover* and *Seven Tickets To Hell* feature art in exactly this style. They are wonderful. Years ago I took a set of the books down to Kinko's and had the covers all blown up to 11x17, and have been lovingly, nay compulsively staring at them ever since. I can't help but wonder what happened to the original art—not that I could ever afford it. Also, could the illo on page 15 be for a title in that series that never got published? Are there other similarly-themed works from this author from this period? I look forward to tracking down Morrow's *Visionary* book, but am finding it frustrating micro-collecting this tiny but magnificent smidgen of his vast output.

P.S. Glad to have *CBM* back—please keep it up!!!

marshall_crist@email.com

CBM *#84 was the first issue we produced here in Missouri, after taking over from Gary Carter and his crew, and, as such, did not truly represent either the "old* CBM*" or the "new* CBM*." As I stated in my editorial in that issue, virtually everything in that issue was written during the "old" regime and edited and laid out by the "new." We were learning our business then, and the lack of captions in the Gray Morrow article was one of the mistakes we learned from. With this issue, #92, we have now produced nine issues of* CBM*, and only now are we starting to feel like we know what we're doing. But with constant and constructive feedback from our readers, we feel like we are doing better and better with each issue. Keep those e-mails and letters coming!*

After sorting thru a new collection that we purchased, I happened to notice a title that just did not seem right, it just jumped out that something was different about it. After buying and bagging and tagging comics for over twenty years, I feel that I have seen so many comics that something out of the ordinary will always get my attention.

A copy of *Eighteen the Magazine for Boys and Young Men* January 1947 on the cover. On the inside of the

comic, the indicia that usually gives all the pertinent information was mysteriously missing and now you are left with no issue information or publisher...almost. At the bottom of the first page of the comic, it states "When writing to advertisers, please mention *Calling All Boys*." So now I know it is related or at least published by the Parents magazine division that cranked out titles like *Calling All Boys* or *Calling All Girls* comics in the 1940s.

As luck would have it, I wandered into a local comic show in Virginia about a month later and while looking thru some Golden Age comics happened to ask a regular dealer if indeed he had some *Calling All Boys* comics on hand. He stated that he only had a few and showed me the selection he had, I looked at the last issue he handed me and...SURPRISE...same cover as my mystery issue and exact same insides as well. The only difference was the changed title and missing issue number from cover and indicia information.

So why the variant? It is not listed in the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* so perhaps it was either overlooked or unknown until now. Was the publisher just trying to print and copyright as many names as they could? Is this issue perhaps a Canadian version that was done with minor changes? Any information by the readers of *CBM* would be appreciated.

Al Stoltz
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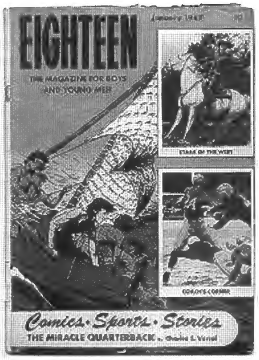
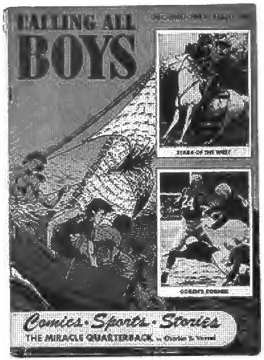
Calling all Fanboys! Can any of you shed any light on this variant?





Observations and Opinions - Number One in a Series of 8,782! (Collect them all!)

I would like to introduce myself as Dan, merely a collector of silver age comics. I first discovered comics on the newsstand, in late 1966. The first comic I can remember purchasing is *Thor* #137 off a spinner rack in a drug store. My young life as I knew it would be forever changed. I was eleven years old.

My daily walk to junior high school was a smorgasbord of drug stores displaying just about every comic you could imagine. One direction going home from school would take me to Cunningham's, yet another direction would take me to a pharmacy with a huge wall devoted to comics and magazines! There was also a drug store that housed two comic book dispensing machines. These machines were around six feet tall, blue, with a slot for putting your dime on one side, your two cents on the other. You would push this slot in, hear your money drop, and watch the comic that was displayed in front on this spiral rod fall down when the rod would turn, and you would open a panel at the bottom and get your treasure.

Sometimes, you would have to buy a book you already had, just to get to the one behind it. The guys that loaded these machines had no policy or plan whatsoever of how to place the books in there. I would always be in school when they were loading them, so I never got the chance to tell them how to do it right. I'm sure they were drinking on the job. Sometimes, for example, three copies of *Tales to Astonish* #98 in a row would be loaded, one behind the other, and you would have to buy all three just to get to the *Tales of Suspense* #96 behind them! It was maddening!! You had to buy them or convince the friends you were with that they really needed *Tales to Astonish* #98! Does anyone out there have memories of these machines?

Does anyone out there remember going up to the cashier and asking her to break a dollar for eight dimes and twenty

[continued on page 80]

Eddie Stanky, Baseball Hero

by Stephen Barrington

The charming Stanky 1950 Bowman card, with the color engraving look.

Baseball fanatics all know who Eddie Stanky was, especially due to his second-base tenure with the 1951 New York Giants and their successful drive for the National League pennant over the Brooklyn Dodgers.

Stanky became part of comic book history when his one-shot photo-cover Fawcett Publications comic, *Eddie Stanky Baseball Hero*, hit the newsstands during the summer of 1951. Fawcett released numerous one-shot comics during that period. A near mint copy of *Eddie Stanky* is listed at $320 in the 32nd *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*.

Baseball writer Charlie Dexter was the author of the issue. Stanky, when he was interviewed by Dexter, was not aware the story would be used for a comic book.

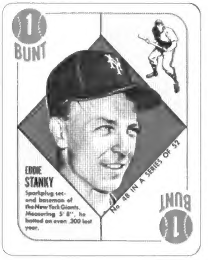
When the issue came out, Stanky said in a 1980 interview, he was "...very happy. I ran home like a little kid and showed it to my wife, Dickie. I was very elated.

"It was a very wonderful and pleasant surprise," Stanky continued. "I'm sorry for not getting more copies of it for the future." Stanky had his copy rebound into a hard cover book with the pages laminated.

Stanky admitted he was "...guilty of not saving the stuff [comics, baseball cards, et al] to give to my children. I never thought about it."

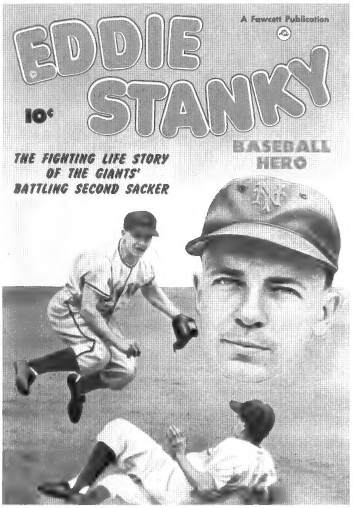
In that same interview, Stanky remembered an encounter with a young fan with a copy of the comic book: "On a Sunday when I was managing the White Sox in 1967, I was signing autographs when a kid comes up and puts in front of me a copy of this comic. I offered him $50 for it and told him to take it back home and ask his mother and father about selling it. Three nights later, he shows up with it and says we have a deal."

[continued on page 78]



(right) Stanky 1951 Topps special baseball playing card ('No. 48 in a series of 52'!).

(far right) The **Eddie Stanky Baseball Hero** (1951) one-shot from Fawcett.



NOLAN'S NOTEBOOK

The Most Under-Rated Kubert

His Viking Prince Stories Were Unsurpassed

by Michelle Nolan

One of the most persistent myths in the world of comic collecting is that the first few post-Comics Code years produced very few memorable issues. Nothing could be further from the truth, however, when it comes to the art of Joe Kubert.

Kubert is best known for being not only one of the finest artists of war comics in the 1950s and '60s, but one of the most prolific as well. But, with all due respect to this superb stylist for his work in DC war titles, my favorite Kubert is the dynamic art he did on the Viking Prince and Hawkman in *The Brave and the Bold*.

His Hawkman stories in *B&B* #34-36 and #42-44 in 1961-62 have often been reprinted and well annotated, but less so his Viking Prince stories in the 1955-59 era, when they may have been as good as anything in comics. Of all the comics produced in the first five years of the post-Code period, one of the few titles as consistently good was *Uncle Scrooge* by Carl Barks.

Brave and the Bold was a truly original attempt by DC to find a winning formula during the chaos caused by the Comics Code in 1955. These stories in #1-24 took us back a millennium or more to the days of Viking Prince, Silent Knight, Golden Gladiator and Robin Hood. Only Robin Hood—which doubtless was rushed into print to take advantage of the popularity of the syndicated television show—starring Richard Greene—was not an original concept, or at least the way DC presented these little epics.

Comics had occasionally touched on all of these themes, of course, but never had anything hit the stands in the same comic book like Viking Prince by Kubert, the Golden Gladiator by Russ Heath and Silent Knight by Irv Novick (I'm not sure exactly how many of the Silent Knight stories he did other than all the Silent Knight covers, since he didn't sign his art).

Kubert and Heath would sometimes appear in the same war titles, but to have this pair doing historic epics in the same comic made *Brave and the Bold* absolutely one of the most aesthetically pleasing titles in the first three decades of comics history. I would rate these among the finest comics of all time, with high-caliber and high-adventure plots worthy of the art.

Kubert had striking work in every issue and Heath appeared in #1-16. Kubert's gritty, naturalistic style was just as effective in the scenario of

Kubert grey-tone cover, **Brave and Bold** #23 (May 1959). The first full Viking Prince issue.

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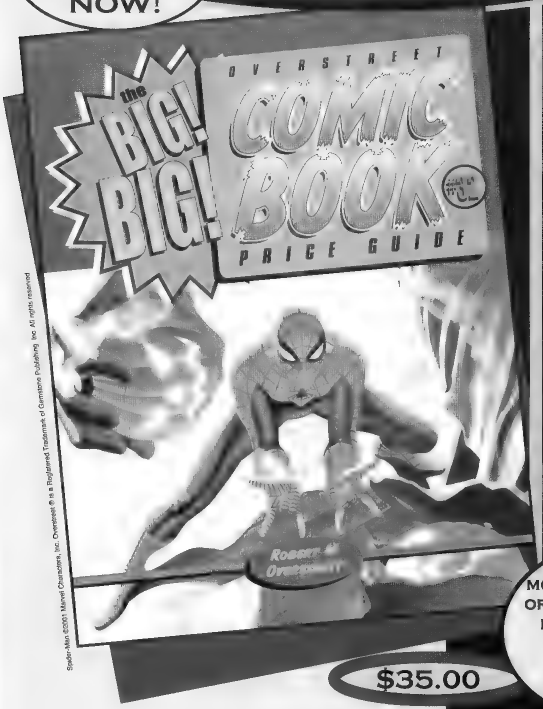

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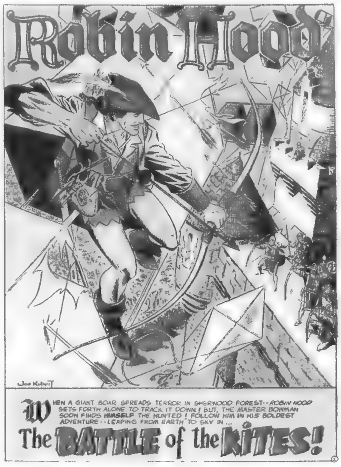
Vikings as it was in war titles, while Heath's fine-line labors provided a sweet contrast—with both artists worthy of the best of the Golden Age of high-adventure Sunday page comic strips in the 1930s.

Even if you can't afford to acquire the complete run—only a few of these stories have been reprinted—you can't go wrong acquiring any of the first 24 issues of *Brave and the Bold*. Other than the first two issues, you can get them from about $30 to $55 in good and sometimes even very good condition—high but not outrageous, considering their quality.

I find it amazing that Kubert was able to turn in such consistently outstanding penciling and inking for so long. The volume of work he turned out would have done justice even to a hack, but Kubert was the furthest thing from a hack you can imagine. The fact that a man this good could be this prolific is stunning.

Just for fun, I used Chris Pedrin's 1994-1995 first edition of "The Big Five"—one of the finest fan publications ever about comics—to measure just how prolific Kubert was. I never could have done it, of course, without this wonderful book, which gives art and writing credits for DC war titles *Our Army at War*, *Star Spangled War Stories*, *All American Men of War*, *Our Fighting Forces* and *G.I. Combat*, plus their successors, from beginning to end.


Robin Hood
WHEN A GIANT ECHO SPREADS TERROR IN SHERWOOD FOREST—ROBIN HOOD SETS FORTH ALONE TO TRACK IT DOWN! BUT, THE MASTER BOWMAN SOON FINDS HIMSELF THE HUNTED! FOLLOW HIM IN HIS BOLDEST ADVENTURE—LEAPING FROM EARTH TO SKY IN...
The BATTLE of the KITES!

Kubert's only Robin Hood story, **Brave and Bold** #6 (July 1956).

My Kubert counts may not be perfect, but they're close enough to make the point. In the war comics alone, Kubert turned out 775 pages over 103 stories in 1955-59 (he came back to DC in 1955), followed by 2,110 pages in 288 stories in the 1960s. He drew 328 pages over 37 stories in the 1970s, when he became DC's primary cover artist and also began to do some of the most striking work ever on Tarzan after DC acquired the license in the 1970s. The total was 3,213 pages in DC's "Big Five" war titles.

Kubert also drew 65 covers over 1955-59, 188 in the 1960s, 303 in the 1970s and 192 in the 1980s—again, just on the war titles (and that doesn't even count some of the esoteric and short-run war titles he worked on that weren't covered in "The Big Five"), for a total of 848 Big Five covers. Along the way, he worked on more than 200 other DC covers and more than 100 other stories covering more than 800 pages after his return to the company in 1955.

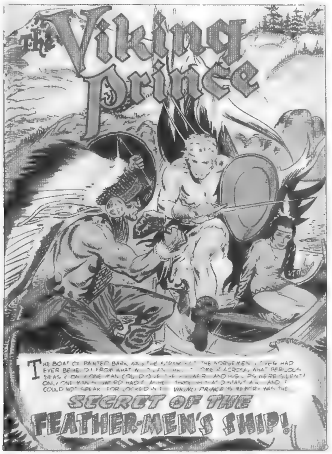
As I said, even a hack could be proud of such a work rate, but Kubert's art was consistently compelling, and never better than on the Viking Prince.

The Viking Prince appeared in every issue of *Brave and the Bold* #1-24 except #6 (June-July 1956). Kubert still had art in that issue—a phenomenally moody eight-page Robin Hood story. It was the only time he ever illustrated the character, but it was truly a treat. In that same issue, however, Heath turned in the last of five of his splendid Golden Gladiator stories (the Gladiator did not appear in #5 in order to make room for Robin Hood's DC debut).

I wish the 38 pages Heath did on the Golden Gladiator could be reprinted in a graphic novel. Wow! This is powerful stuff, and, as is typical with Heath, it seems historically accurate, too. It should be noted that Heath was only 30 when he drew the Golden Gladiator. With all due respect to a few of the fine young artists working today, how many would take the trouble to make their material so historically accurate? But then, that was Heath's dedicated style.

One of the mysteries I've always wondered about was how well those first 24 issues of *Brave and the Bold* sold (DC sales figures were not included in the statements of ownership until the 1960s). In 1959, DC turned Brave and Bold into a tryout title identical to *Showcase*, which was usually a rousing success beginning with #4 (Sept-Oct 1956), featuring the Silver Age debut of The Flash.

I'd like to think the high-adventure themes of *Brave and the Bold* sold well enough to stand on their own, but that DC felt another tryout title would sell even better. It's a log-



KUBERT IN BRAVE AND THE BOLD

ical consideration, since no other DC title would have been a suitable tryout vehicle at the time.

Many collectors forget that the first tryout issues of *Brave and the Bold* were not the Suicide Squad in #25-27, but rather Kubert's all-Viking Prince issues in #23-24. Alas, neither of those worthwhile titles achieved their own comics. Nor did Cave Carson or Strange Sports Stories. *Brave and the Bold*'s only successes until the title became a team-up comic with #50 were Justice League of America and Hawkman. In contrast, look at the *Showcase* stars—The Flash, Challengers of the Unknown, Lois Lane, Space

A Kubert gem! **Brave and Bold** #10 (Jan 1957), my favorite story.

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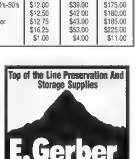

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Ranger, Adam Strange, Rip Hunter, Green Lantern, Sea Devils, Aquaman, the Atom, Metal Men—just an unbelievable run of commercially successful winners.

I wonder whether Kubert's Viking Prince (assuming he would have had time to draw him) would have succeeded during the peak run of *Showcase*, which did not really have a post-Flash flop until former *Action Comics* longtime backup feature Tommy Tomorrow in #41-42 and 44. I'm not counting the one-shot features in *Showcase* #1-3 and 5.

I loved Adam Strange and Heath's Sea Devils (just because it was Heath!), but it always seemed odd to me that so-so characters like Space Ranger and Rip Hunter had longer runs than the Viking Prince, which was so much better presented in both story and art. Ah well, who ever said comic book life is fair?

Kubert did 25 Viking Prince stories (including two each in #23-24) covering 247 pages. He also brought back the Viking Prince to co-star with Sergeant Rock in *Our Army at War* #162-163 (Jan and Feb 1966). I recall seeing those two issues on the stands and feeling like an old friend had returned. All these Viking Prince stories would make sensational graphic novels, because the tales still hold up beautifully today. In fact, they would be among the least-dated stories anyone could ever reprint from the 1950s.

In 1971, the nifty 52-page *DC Special* #12 represented the only all-Viking Prince reprint issue. A year earlier, there was also an all-Kubert *DC Special* #5 with Viking Prince. In 1988-89, the six-issue run of *Best of the Brave and the Bold* reprinted many of the classic Kubert and Heath tales. These are among the best reprint bargains you'll ever see.

If there are any Kubert completists, they'll probably need to amass more than 2,000 comics ranging from the early 1940s to the 1990s. I don't have a complete Kubert index—some of the listings in books are woefully incomplete—but just for fun I tried tracing how many pre-Code titles he appeared in before coming back to DC in 1955.

In a 13-year period from 1942 through 1954, Kubert worked for DC, Harvey, Avon, St. John, Holyoke, Gleason, EC, Trojan, Atlas, Quality, Fiction House, Interfaith and perhaps others. I traced at least 47 different titles over those dozen years, and I probably missed at least a dozen more titles. It's no wonder he once quipped that one time or another, "I worked for just about every comic book company!" In truth, he probably came as close as anyone.

Some of Kubert's early work on Hawkman for DC is amazing, considering he started drawing the character at the age of 17 or 18, with a wonderful Hawkman story in the one-shot *Big All American*. That legendary comic is worth more than $800 in "good," so I've always considered one of my luckiest purchases to be an incomplete copy, about half there, for $30 with the complete Hawkman and Green Lantern stories. What a treasure!

The only 1950s Viking Prince covers Kubert drew were on *Brave and the Bold* #23-24 and a partial for #1, which featured all three characters. But the Irv Novick covers on the other issues aren't bad at all, especially #19, my favorite. The Viking Prince battles Sigrud, Queen of the Valkyries in a cover scene that can only be called a classic! Kubert's art on the story was unusual, too, with the male-female battle scenes rendered in breathtaking yet tasteful style.

Other than the partial on #1, the Viking Prince appeared only on the cover of #2 over the first 15 issues. Robin Hood was featured on #5, 12 and 14 and the Silent Knight on the rest. That has always been a major puzzle to me, since I consider the Viking Prince to be the stronger character. I guess

[continued on page 78]

The Brave and the Bold #19 (Sep 1958), Irv Novick cover.

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IN

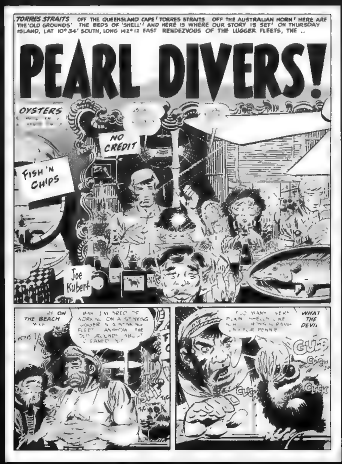
By S.C. Ringgenberg

Joe Kubert almost needs no introduction. He's one of the real legends of the comics business. He's done it all, and he's done almost all of it with class, imbuing even the most mirror job, be it a cover, advertising illo, comic strip, comic book page or inking job, with his trademarked visual excitement. His gritty yet oddly graceful figures have depicted a galaxy of different characters, from Hawkman and the Flash to Sgt. Rock, Tor, Tarzan, the Viking Prince, Abraham Stone, Tex Willer, and too many others to recount here. Aside from his artistic and editorial contributions to comics, he remains one of the medium's foremost innovators, starting with pioneering 3-D (along with Norman Maurer) in the 1950s, to starting the first school specifically for cartoonists and comic book artists in 1976, to continuing to experiment with storytelling, color, format, and the educational uses of comics. Kubert is a dynamo of creative force that would seem remarkable in a man half his age. Yet, at 76, Kubert still approaches life with zest, justifiable pride in the accomplishments of his sons and his students and a contagious enthusiasm for his chosen medium. He is always a pleasure to talk to.

TERVIEWED

RINGGENBERG: Now you've told this story many times in the past, but if you wouldn't mind repeating it for our readers, talk about how you got into comic books in childhood.

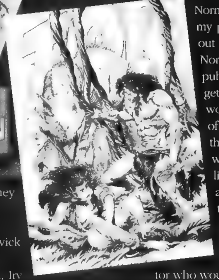
KUBERT: Well, I'd always read the comic strips in the newspapers, and I guess that's where it started because there were no comic books when I started reading the cartoons in the newspapers. This was back when I was a kid. Let's see, I was born in '26, which means that we're talking about maybe '29, when I was three or four years old. I started drawing when I was two, as soon as I could hold a pencil. The comic strips in the newspaper, *Tarzan* when Foster was doing it and Alex Raymond's *Flash Gordon*, and Caniff's *Terry and the Pirates*. Those strips really inspired me, gave me the impetus…They were great. That's what I wanted to do. And the drawings that I did were of muscle guys and super-people. Eventually, when comic books appeared, I was about 11 or 12 years old when comic books started. It was while I was still going to junior high school, I think I was probably in seventh or eighth grade, I was living in Brooklyn at the time, and a friend of mine was related to the people who started the MLJ Publishing Company, the forerunner of Archie Comics. It's a funny thing. When you're a kid and you draw, you're suddenly popular somehow because to others it's like magic. And so this friend suggested, "Look, my uncle…" I think it was Silberkleit who he was related to, "puts out these comic books, Joe. Why don't you take your drawings up, and maybe you can get a job up there." Now, the MLJ Company was on Canal Street in New York; I lived in Brooklyn, in East Flatbush at the time. I said, "Gee, that sounds great." And I took a bunch of drawings that I did. Of course, I could only guess at what the stuff looked like. I had never seen an original drawing. I had no idea. I'd never seen anything prior to print, and so I put together a bunch of drawings on whatever paper I had, wrapped them in a newspaper, and got on a subway, which at that time cost a nickel. I think I was about 11 or 12 at the time. I just went up to the office—no pre-announcement or anything—and they were the kindest group of people in the world. People that I met at that time were Mort Meskin and Harry Shorten. A whole bunch of people were working up in a bullpen for MLJ, doing books like *Pep Comics*. I met Irv Novick up there for the first time. I met Bob Montana, when he had just started doing Archie for the comic books. And these guys helped me in every conceivable way; they'd check over my drawings, they'd spend time with me. It was just, you know, it was great. Here's this obnoxious kid coming up unannounced barging in


TORRES STRAITS OFF THE QUEENSLAND CAPE TORRES STRAITS OFF THE AUSTRALIAN MAINLAND HERE ARE THE OLD GROUNDS... THE BEDS OF SHELL! AND HERE IS WHERE OUR STORY IS SET! ON THURSDAY ISLAND, LAT 10° 34' SOUTH, LONG 142° 13 EAST RENDEZVOUS OF THE LUGGER FLEETS, THE ...
PEARL DIVERS!
OYSTERS
NO CREDIT
FISH 'N CHIPS
Joe Kubert
ON THE BEACH
WHAT THE DEVIL

remembered me as an 11- or 12-year-old the first time I came up to MLJ. Irv was one of the guys. He gave me my first lesson in how to draw a German helmet. But this was the way all these guys were—the friendliest, nicest bunch of people. They went out of their way to help me, to show me how to draw correctly. One of the first jobs I did was inking on Bob Montana's Archie. Now, letting a kid like me work on professional material...well, it was just thrilling for me. And that's the way it started.

RINGGENBERG: For how long were you getting little lessons from people like Irv Novick or Mort Meskin before you actually did professional work?

KUBERT: Probably about a year, a year or so. I got my first job, I think I was about 12 or 12-and-a-half, something like that. It was when I had just started high school. While I was attending the High School of Music and Art. It was probably in the first year. A school mate friend of mine, Norman Maurer, who started out as my partner when we were putting out the 3-D books later on. But, Norm and I would go up to all the publishers. We would kind of forget to go to school that day. We would instead make the rounds of all of the publishers, showing them our stuff. That's the way we got started. We picked up a little job here, a little job there, and they would show us how to correct our work. But it was kind of a hit-and-miss thing. When we were lucky enough to speak to an artist or an editor who would have time, which happened

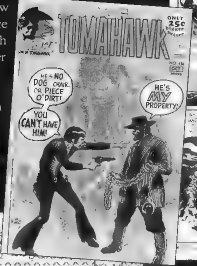


and..."I want to show you the stuff I'm doing." And they were very, very kind. That really was the beginning of it.

RINGGENBERG: You were working alongside Irv Novick in the '60s and '70s. You knew him a long time.

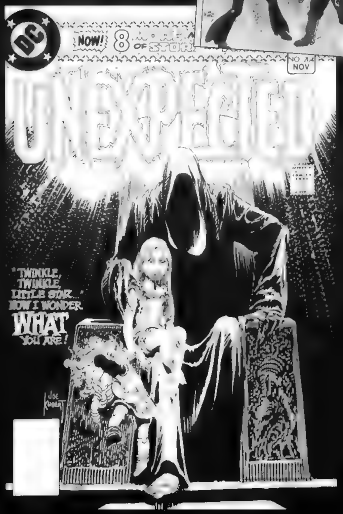
KUBERT: Yeah. This was over sixty years ago. As I said, Irv

more often than not, that was the way that both Norm and I acquired the knowledge that's necessary to do this stuff. Because there's no way to learn how to do the kind of drawing necessary to reproduce in comic books by yourself. There's a special way of doing this work. You can't just do pencil drawings and it's not just a matter of ink drawings. You couldn't do dry-brush, especially when I first started because the printing procedures were so crude compared to what's going on today that, unless the artwork was prepared properly, half the stuff would not even reproduce. Even at that, when you put color on top of it the registers were so far off that you'd have a, you know, yellow and blue, which would produce green, you would have a half-inch halo of the color because the register was so far off, more often than not.



RINGGENBERG: Did you catch grief from your parents for skipping school?

KUBERT: I don't think they knew. (Laughter)

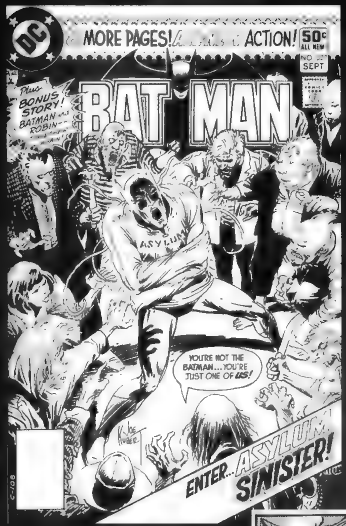


RINGGENBERG: I see.

KUBERT: When they found out, I guess I did. It was towards the end of the year, when they discovered it—my teachers would send a note home, "Joe is doing poorly." In retrospect, I don't even recall that they reported the fact that I guess I played hooky more times than not. I just really don't recall, but I know that when my grades started slipping, I got promoted on them I really had to get to work. In fact, I did have to lay aside all my visits to the publishers' offices and looking for work. I had to really buckle down and do my schoolwork, which I did. I finally graduated.

RINGGENBERG: But I guess during the summer you were free to pursue the cartooning, right?

KUBERT: Yeah. In the summer was when I really was able to pick up jobs like working up at Will Eisner's office. At the time he was doing *The Spirit*. This, of course, was prior to the war, and prior to Will's going to the army. But the job I got up at Will's was just erasing other people's drawings and cleaning up, and sweeping up the place. But it was an opportunity to learn, to see and to find out from the guys who were the pros, just how the stuff should be done. Later on, I think I was still a junior in high school, I was inking on *The Spirit*. I was commuting up to Stamford, Connecticut, where Will was in the army. I think it was maybe '41 or '42, something like that. Lou Fine was doing the penciling on *The Spirit*, Alex Kotzky and I were doing inking. We were turning out *The Spirit* magazine.



This was the job I had during the summer. So, during the summer instead of commuting to the High School of Music and Art, which was on 135th Street in New York, I commuted up to Stamford, Connecticut every day.

RINGGENBERG: Since you were a kid, and the least experienced artist, what sort of stuff would they have you inking on the strip?

KUBERT: On the *Spirit* strip? I guess I was doing most everything. I was doing figures; I was doing the backgrounds. Kotzky may have been doing the faces. I really don't recall. I don't recall any kind details. I think we were both inking the whole strip.

RINGGENBERG: Were Lou Fine's pencils tight?

KUBERT: Oh God, I was such a naïve kid that I wasn't even frightened working over Lou's pencils. They were beautiful. I recall he used a mechanical pencil, and instead of one simple line, his work was sketchy. In other words, you could see the foundation of the drawing, and then he'd tighten his drawings on top of those foundations. But it's easy to make a mistake and ink the wrong pencils, which I guess I didn't do too much of because they didn't fire me.

RINGGENBERG: Well, in those days, when you were doing assisting like that, would you bring all the money back to your family, or did they let you keep some of it?

KUBERT: That's an interesting question. My parents came from Europe to the United States. I was born in Poland. I was two months old when my parents brought me here. The way people from the old country lived was that whenever I or my sisters went out to work the money that we made went into the pot, and the pot-keeper was my mother. She was the exchequer. None of us ever considered holding any money. I mean, this was the way it was supposed to be. As a matter of fact, I never cashed a check until I got married, because as long as I was with the family my money went into the pot. Whenever I needed any money or if I had to go out, or whatever it was, if I had to buy a car, I got it from my mother.

RINGGENBERG: Joe, let me backtrack a bit. Now, before you worked for Eisner, I know you had worked in the Chesler shop.

KUBERT: Right, but that was not really working. That was due to the kindness of Harry Chesler, who allowed me and several other guys at one time or another, to come up to his studio. There were about a dozen artists up there. He had a stable of these guys up on 23rd Street in Manhattan.

RINGGENBERG: Was this on the east side or the west side?

KUBERT: On the west side.

RINGGENBERG: What was Chesler's studio layout like? Can you describe it?

KUBERT: (Laughs) It was an old ramshackle building. (Laughter) A little elevator that shook and creaked up the three stories of the building. You could just about squeeze one or two guys into that elevator. I can still

THE GREEN BERET
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I GUESS THE JUICY STUFF'S ALL GONE!
I'LL HAVE YOU AGAINST YOUR WILL, YOU'LL WANT TO ASK FOR MY LOVE!
NOW WHERE WAS I?
I KNOW, LIKE MY BLACK BELT!
TELL A JOKE, MAINTAIN COMPOSURE!

remember the smell of it—not that it was a bad smell—but you could smell the wood, you could smell the ink, you could smell the paper. Harry wasn't on the same floor as the artists. They were up on the third floor—I believe it was on the third floor. Harry himself was on the ground floor. That was where the first landing of the elevator was. But the top floor, which I think was the third floor, was where the artists were. Old wood; you could feel the boards creak under your feet as you were walking. It was old at that time, and there were maybe two or three windows in the room where the artists worked, where you could look out on 23rd Street, the main drag. There are perhaps apocryphal stories about Harry asking the guys to hook up, when he had trouble paying the electric bill, to plug in on the telephone pole. To keep the lights on so the guys could see while they were drawing. I have a feeling, and I've heard this from several guys who worked for Harry at the time, that that was really true. They pulled a wire outside the office where the artists worked and plugged it into the telephone pole. That's how they were able to get lights.

But anyhow, what Harry did was he allowed me, after school, at say two or two-thirty, he let me come up to the place where the artists worked, set up a table for me, gave me a script that he had no intention of using, just for me to practice. And he told the other artists to help me—to correct my work whenever they'd have a chance—which they did. And that's what I did while I was going to school. After I got out of school, I'd go over to Harry's for

about two hours, and I'd get home perhaps five or six o'clock at night. And for that, Harry would give me five bucks a week, which, at that time, was a hell of a lot of money for me.

RINGGENBERG: That seems tremendously generous considering Chesler's reputation.

KUBERT: Well, I've heard all kinds of negative stories about Harry, none of which I ever experienced myself. He was the kindest, the most generous guy in the years after I bumped into Harry when I started my school. I don't know if you'd heard about that.

RINGGENBERG: No.

KUBERT: Well, unbeknownst to me, Harry had moved to New Jersey, and bought property here. I hadn't seen Harry this was after my high school, and after having worked up at the Chesler studio for one year or so, I started getting work and there was no reason for me to continue going up to Harry's. I was getting work and I was able to do it at home. Years later, when I started the school here, in '76, which was, I guess, maybe twenty-five or thirty years later, we're living here in Dover, and my wife is at a picture-framing place. Some older man comes over to her, seeing my name on the package that she was picking up, and asks if this Joe Kubert is an artist. And she said yes, and this guy says to her, "Well, I'm Harry Chesler. Joe used to work for me." He followed

her home over to our house. I recognized him immediately. This was the same Harry Chesler who I'd known thirty or thirty-five years before. Harry lived in Succasunna, which is like two or three miles west of Dover. Harry had bought property when the land was really low in price, and was doing very, very well. He'd bought houses and was doing very well in the real estate business. We got together, and when I started the school, he gave me a lot of advice. I remember a terrific Christmas party we had for Harry at the school when the school first opened. We invited all the guys who had ever worked up at Harry Chesler's place, like George Tuska, anybody who was still alive, anyhow. And we had a great time. Great Christmas party.

RINGGENBERG: What was Harry Chesler like? I mean, what did he look like?

KUBERT: Harry was a kind of short, stubby guy. He was a dinosaur from another time. He came originally from the advertising business in Chicago. He wore a fedora hat, always wore the fedora. Had a little half-smoked cigar in his face all the time. Always wore a suit, tie, jacket, and a vest. And that cigar would roam over his face from one side of the mouth to the other as he spoke to you. He would hook his thumbs into his vest as he talked to you. He was, as I said, the prototype of the advertising executive—a hustler. But, as I said before, he was one of the nicest, kindest guys I'd ever met.

RINGGENBERG: What was up at the Chesler shop at the time you started getting lessons and helping out?

KUBERT: Well, George Tuska was there, and Rube Moriera was there. Charlie Sultan was there. Others, who don't come to mind.

RINGGENBERG: I've heard the name Charlie Sultan before in other contexts. What did he do? What was he most known for?

KUBERT: It's hard to say, because I don't think any of the guys who worked up at Chesler's did anything that you might consider notable. Harry (Chesler) packaged comic books for different publishers. Anybody could say that they were a publisher as long as they could get the workings of a comic book from Harry. Harry would provide these comic book publishers with whatever kind of comic book that they wanted. If it was humor, he had a bunch of guys who were writing, drawing, and put the whole thing together and he would deliver not only the artwork, he would deliver finished color plates. These things were, you know, pushed out in factory style. And the stuff that the guys were turning out, I mean every one of the artists that worked up there doubled and tripled in brass. One week they'd be working on humor, the next week they'd be working horror or adventure. The stuff would be churned out, book after book. And none of them were, I think, you know, outstanding.

RINGGENBERG: Okay, would the artists on staff be paid a regular salary?

KUBERT: Yes. That was an advantage for them. Times were hard, and Harry would pay them by the week. They wouldn't be paid freelance per page. But I remember stories, and again, I don't know how apocryphal this might be, but I'm told by some of the guys that worked for Harry, that come payday the guys would go down to be paid, and Harry would ask, "How much do you need this week?" (Laughter)

RINGGENBERG: Did you ever work for the Fox Studios?

KUBERT: Not that I recall. I know that I was up to Fox looking for work, but I don't recall having done anything for them. I really don't remember.

RINGGENBERG: Following your year or so up at Chesler's shop, where did you go next?

KUBERT: I kind of worked freelance. I did work for Jerry Iger up at his studio. I don't recall whether that was a summer job because it was still while I was going to school. It must have been after I worked up at Will Eisner's place for the summer, and Will might have suggested that I go, because Eisner and Iger had a working arrangement. I don't know exactly what that was, but I know that they had business dealings, and I think that Will probably recommended that I go up to Jerry.

RINGGENBERG: I see. So, when you were still in high school, you were working professionally.

KUBERT: Oh, yeah, yeah. All through high school and part of junior high. While I was still in high school, I was working for All-American Comics. I was doing *Hawkman* at that time. Shelly Mayer was my editor and I was doing that for a couple of years before I graduated.

RINGGENBERG: Do you remember much about Max Gaines?

KUBERT: Yeah, I met him a couple of times, but you got to remember that I was still a kid, maybe fifteen, sixteen, something like that. I kind of stayed in the background. I think I may have met Max Gaines once or twice, and may have spoken to him, but that's about it.

OH GOD
HE'S STILL STANDING! HE'S NOT EVEN BLEEDIN'!
WOW, YOU'VE DONE IT ALL NIGHT TO PITCH, THESE MOVES, BUT, FIRST...
LET ME SHOW YOU THE FIERCE OF YOUR WORD...
AS IF I CAN'T WORK!
I SHOW NO PARTICULAR SENSE OF RACIAL BIAS.
WRONG IS WRONG!
I AM AN EQUAL RIGHTS JUSTICE ADVOCATE!
YOU WILL BY EQUALLY SEE YOUR INDICATIONS

RINGGENBERG: Yeah, and I know that All American eventually got absorbed by DC.

KUBERT: That's correct.

RINGGENBERG: Shelly Mayer, now he's a real classic figure in the business. How was Shelly to work for as an editor?

KUBERT: Wonderful. He was probably as close to being a mentor for me as anybody I can think of. He was just a terrifically patient guy, and he taught me a hell of a lot. A fact that might be of interest to you is that DC has just set up a five thousand dollar scholarship at my school in Shelly's name.

RINGGENBERG: That's great! I'm glad to hear that.

KUBERT: Yeah.

RINGGENBERG: When you took over *Tarzan*, you must have been familiar with Moldoff's work preceding you.

KUBERT: I had seen Moldoff's work, of course.

RINGGENBERG: Did you like Moldoff's approach to it?

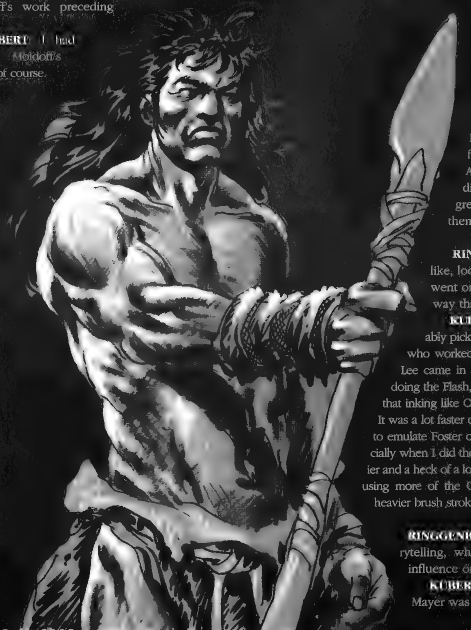
KUBERT: Well, Shelly Moldoff was actually utilizing a lot of Foster's and Raymond's artwork as a guide to go by. And I liked that because it was similar. I mean he was kind of using both the artists that I always admired.

RINGGENBERG: Did Foster continue to be an inspiration to you?

KUBERT: Always. Always. When he went on to *Prince Valiant*, his stuff only got better. I always loved his work and still do. I think the older I get the more I come to appreciate it.

RINGGENBERG: It really seems like Foster was really the best artist who ever worked in the medium.

KUBERT: Well, it's hard to say that about any artist. I don't like to do that because I guess quality is really in the eye of the beholder. There are some people who would look at Foster, and would say, "Well, gee, it looks nice, but there are other artists who are better." I hesitate to put an appellation like "he's the best" or "he's the greatest" because art is really judged by the people who are looking at it. To me, Foster was terrific, Raymond was fantastic, and Caniff was just great. All three of these guys worked in different styles. Their styles differed greatly, but I appreciated each one of them.



RINGGENBERG: Now, it seemed like, looking at your work, especially as it went on, that you were influenced by the way that Caniff spotted his blacks.

KUBERT: Absolutely. But I think I probably picked up more from a guy like Lee Elias, who worked very similar to Caniff's style. When Lee came in to All American Comics and started doing the Flash, the one thing that really got me was that inking like Caniff came to me a lot more quickly. It was a lot faster doing that style of artwork than trying to emulate Foster or Raymond. And so I adapted, especially when I did the Flash. I found it a heck of a lot easier and a heck of a lot quicker to do when I applied myself using more of the Caniff style—using more blacks and heavier brush strokes.

RINGGENBERG: To speak of layout and storytelling, who do you think had the biggest influence on your approach to that?

KUBERT: Probably Shelly Mayer. Shelly Mayer was for good storytelling. That, to him,

and to me now, is the most important factor in being a cartoonist. We are communicators. We are storytellers. You can do the most beautiful drawing in the world, but if it doesn't tell the story, you're not doing your job as a cartoonist. You may be designing some really nice wallpaper or some great tapestry, but you're not being a cartoonist. A cartoonist is a guy who is communicating, trying to put into picture form, a story, a drama, he's trying to put that together in a graphic form. And that's what I constantly try to do, and that's what I learned from Shelly. Shelly said, "The characters in the story have to look like the kind of characters who are doing what you're having them do. They have to react emotionally, you have to see it in their faces, you have to see it in the way they move, and they have to be different-looking." All those things made sense to me, they just made sense.

BRUCE WAYNE AWAKENS IN HIS MANSION... AS FLITTING SHAPES SKITTER ACCROSS THE MOON. ONLY A DREAM... BUT...WAS IT A DREAM?
HE IS THE BATMAN... DRIVEN INCESSANTLY TO HUNT FOR EVIL... AS HIS NAMESAKES HUNT IN ORDER TO EXIST. IT IS NIGHT ONCE MORE... TIME TO HUNT AGAIN.
THE END

RINGGENBERG: One thing I think is very important in storytelling is body language. What you were just saying about a character reacting to what the other character is saying.

KUBERT: Yup, yup. And I was lucky enough when I was working with Bob Kanigher, and Bob was writing the stories, he paid particular attention to that. And he often commented that, when guys are running, they run differently. They also don't run the same way. When a guy reacts to whatever position or condition that he's in, he reacts depending on the kind of person, the kind of character he is. And that should show in the way you depict them graphically.

RINGGENBERG: Joe, you were too young to serve in the military during World War II, so what were you doing during the war years?

KUBERT: Well, that turned out to be an advantage for me. The worst thing that happened for the rest of the world, but that probably was one of my biggest breaks. Because a lot of the guys who would have the jobs that I was doing, getting the jobs with comic books, were in the army. They were drafted, they were off, and so the publishers needed people. Comic books were selling like crazy during the war, especially to the Armed Forces, and sixty-four page magazines were selling like they were going [out of style].

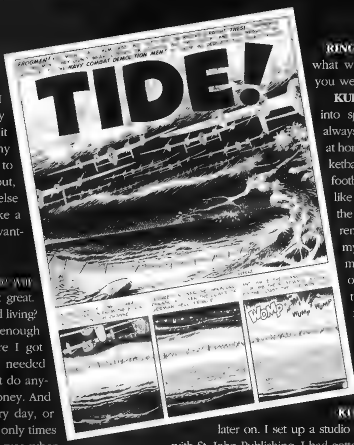
RINGGENBERG: Okay, so during the war years you were going basically from being a student and freelancer to being a full-time freelancer. Did you ever consider doing anything but being a cartoonist?

KUBERT: No. Never.

RINGGENBERG: Wow. That must have been kind of cool to know exactly what you wanted to do from such a young age.

KUBERT: Well, I never thought about it. I never consid

ered what I might do otherwise. I guess I'd always say that if I didn't do cartooning, if I couldn't make a living as a cartoonist, that I could do anything that I put my mind to. I don't care what the hell it was. I'm was digging ditches or any other business. Anything that I had to do, I would do. But, as it worked out, I never had to resort to anything else because I was always able to make a living doing that which I always wanted to do, which was cartooning.



RINGGENBERG: Well during the war years I know the rates weren't that great. Were you able to make a pretty good living?

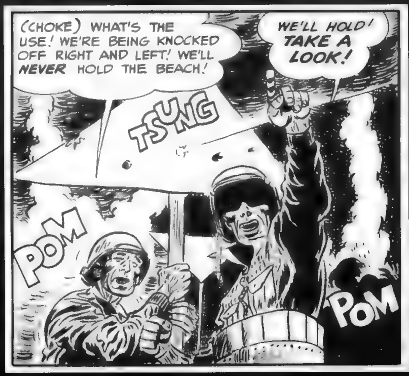
KUBERT: I made a living good enough so that when I was single, before I got married, I worked when I felt I needed dough. I would take off or just not do anything until I needed some more money. And it wasn't as if I was working every day, or that I felt that I was locked in. The only times when it perhaps got a little rough was when there were deadlines on the work that I was doing. And invariably, like most cartoonists, I would leave everything for the last day, and have to pull a couple of all-nighters before I was able to finish the work. But, you know, we're talking about I was maybe seventeen, eighteen years old, and nothing bothered me. Absolutely nothing. I was very, very lucky

RINGGENBERG: In those days what would you do for fun when you weren't working?

KUBERT: Oh, I've always been into sports I guess a little bit. I always liked to play ball if I wasn't at home working; I'd get some basketball games going, or be playing football or swimming or things like that. What else? I'd go into the city. Jeeze, I really don't remember. And my folks and my sisters, we were pretty much family-oriented, and a lot of the time, a lot of the spare time, we'd be spending with family.

RINGGENBERG: Did you ever hang around much with other cartoonists that you'd met?

KUBERT: Oh yeah, but that was later on. I set up a studio when I first became involved with St. John Publishing. I had gotten a studio in New York. This was before I went into the Army. On Park Avenue, which sounds great, but it was a little skinny building amongst all the other beautiful edifices, and me and Carmine were there. A guy by the name of Hy Rosen and Alex Toth were working up there a while. A bunch of guys. And there were other cartoonists who were located close by, and we'd get together very often. But that didn't happen until I was close to my twenties.



RINGGENBERG: Tell me, what was Alex Toth like in the old days?

KUBERT: He was a very fastidious, hard working, terrific young guy who did outstanding work. He was admired by everybody—by all of us. He was a good guy, a good kid. I miss seeing his work around.

RINGGENBERG: During the war years and then in the period following, you were working for DC during that period, weren't you?

KUBERT: Yeah.

RINGGENBERG: Did you have any other accounts?

KUBERT: Oh yeah. I used to keep myself busy. I've told the students that it's very important for anybody doing freelance work to make sure that they're working for at least two or three other places at the same time, to never put all of your eggs in one basket, just in case one place went soft, or one wasn't

doing so well, you could always kind of push for the others.

RINGGENBERG: So, tell me about what you were doing in the post-war years. Which characters and companies were you with?

KUBERT: Well, the first company that I became involved with after I got out of the Army during the Korean War in the early '50s, was the St. John Publishing Company. I had packaged books for them prior to my going into the Army. And they were happy to get me back when I got out. That was when my buddy Norman and I formed a partnership and started putting books out. We came out with the 3-D *Mighty Mouse* comic book. But when the comic book business was hit by the Kefauver Senate Search committee everything kind of flattened out, and I think I then went up to DC. That's when I got involved with Bob Kanigher, who was the editor at the time. That's I guess when Sgt. Rock first started, back in the mid-'50s.

RINGGENBERG: Can you tell me a bit about the three stories you did for EC. I know that unlike EC's regular artists, you only did the three jobs.

KUBERT: Yeah. That's because Harvey didn't really like the work that I did.

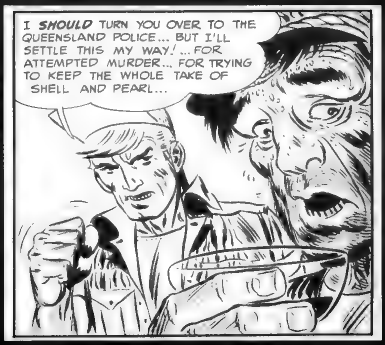
RINGGENBERG: Really? So, how did you get up to EC?

KUBERT: Well, I knew of the company, of course, and how it maintained a high quality of publications and had a good rep. As a matter of fact, during the 3-D days Willie Elder, one of their artists, was up at our place when we were putting out the 3-D books, doing the 3-D work, which helped EC convert some of their early books from the '50s into 3-D stuff. I knew the guys. Feldstein was a graduate of the High School of Music and Art. Harvey was a graduate of the High School of Music and Art. Norman and I had gone to the school. Norm graduated, I didn't. I graduated from a school in New Jersey here. Norm's brother Lenny, who worked with us, also knew the guys up at EC, Kurtzman and all the rest, and it was just a natural progression for me to go up there and make the rounds when St. John went down the drain. I had to set myself up a whole new schedule of work, and one of the places I went to was EC.

RINGGENBERG: And what did you think of the EC product.

KUBERT: I thought they were great. They turned out a beautiful product.

RINGGENBERG: Was there a particular reason why you worked with Harvey Kurtzman and not with Al Feldstein?


I SHOULD TURN YOU OVER TO THE QUEENSLAND POLICE... BUT I'LL SETTLE THIS MY WAY!.. FOR ATTEMPTED MURDER... FOR TRYING TO KEEP THE WHOLE TAKE OF SHELL AND PEARL...

WOOF!
SHE'S LAYING HER TORPEDOES BACK! SHE'S GOING FOR ANOTHER BROADSIDE!
BOMBERS STAND BY!
STAND BY WITH THE DEPTH CHARGES!
HE'LL LAY ATHWART HER WAKE!
WELL DONE, MY BOMBERS! YOU'VE GOT ONE DON'T YOU?
CAPTAIN! SHE'S SINKING! I CAN SEE THE STRIPE I'D HAVE GIVEN TO HER, SIR!
OH, YOU'LL GET YOUR STRIPE!

KUBERT: No any particular reason but the books that Harvey was doing were probably more suitable for the stuff that I did.

RINGGENBERG: Well, I've seen that during the 50s you did some horror jobs elsewhere.

KUBERT: Yeah. I guess I've done stories in almost every genre.

RINGGENBERG: Of the two – stories you did for EC do you have a particular favorite.

KUBERT: I hardly ever remember them.

RINGGENBERG: You did a D-Day story about combat engineers…

KUBERT: I don't remember that one.

RINGGENBERG: There was one – it's in Jester Devil Jones.

KUBERT: I remember that one.

RINGGENBERG: And there was the one about the pearl divers.

KUBERT: Yeah, and I remember that. I think the pearl divers story was the first story I did.

RINGGENBERG: Did you find it constricting to work with Kurtzman's tissue layouts?

KUBERT: Yes, I did. And perhaps that's what showed so negatively in my work. Harvey felt that he didn't want to continue with me. And incidentally, Harvey was a very good and dear friend of mine. The fact that he didn't feel that my work was suitable had absolutely nothing to do with our own personal relationship.

RINGGENBERG: Oh, so even after Harvey said, "We can't use you, Joe," you continued to be friends?

KUBERT: Absolutely.

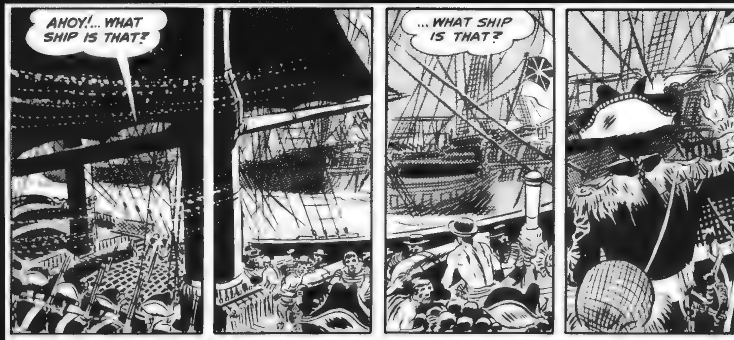
RINGGENBERG: That's nice that you were able to stay friends with him. A lot of guys might've gotten mad and just walked out.

KUBERT: I'd been in the business long enough to have a professional attitude and to know that if somebody is not happy with my work that it has nothing to do with me, it's just that he doesn't like my work. There are others who do like my work, and that's fine, but the one that I'm always trying to please with my work is me. If others like it, that's fine. If some don't like it, that's fine too. But it has nothing to do with personal relationships.

RINGGENBERG: How do you think the work you did for EC stacks up to your other output at the time?

KUBERT: I try my best on every job that I do and if I was not satisfied or unhappy with the work, I wouldn't have handed it in. I did the best that I could at the time.

RINGGENBERG: It seemed like the war stories you did with Bob Kanigher a little later were less realistic and more



character-driven than Harvey Kurtzman's.

KUBERT: Well, they were different. Bob gave me a hell of a lot more freedom. The work that I was doing with him was more comfortable for me than with Harvey. Apparently Bob liked my stuff. Always did. The more he liked it, the more freedom he gave me, and the more I enjoyed doing it. And, it's like I said, not everybody's going to love you in this world (laughter) and not everybody's going to love the work you do. And I accept that.

RINGGENBERG: When you were working with Kanigher, you said he gave you a lot of freedom. Would this involve changing dialogue occasionally?

KUBERT: Often.

RINGGENBERG: Oh, so you would rewrite Bob's dialogue?

KUBERT: I would not rewrite. I might add some verbiage, extend some stuff. But the term rewrite is like changing the story. I would never do that. I would never change or alter a story. But, I might add some additional panels. I might add text to some panels or change several panels into one. I might add a line of dialogue or extend a line of dialogue, but yeah, and he permitted me to do that.

RINGGENBERG: And would you be drawing a scene and something might occur to you, like what the characters would say in that situation, say?

KUBERT: If I felt that by extending a couple of words that it might be more apt as to what the character would say, yeah, I would do that, and Bob would let it stay. Giving me that freedom allowed me a lot more room to put in things that I felt I could add, and apparently Bob agreed. So, it worked out well for both of us.

RINGGENBERG: Having worked with Sgt. Rock for so long, can you sort of hear his voice in your head when you're reading over the scripts?

KUBERT: Yeah. A character like that, after working on it as long as I have, kind of almost writes itself in terms of what he would do or what he wouldn't do under certain circumstances. His characteristics are really spelled out very clearly.

RINGGENBERG: Well, considering the amount of work you did with Bob Kanigher, that's probably one of the longest runs on any character by any artist.

KUBERT: That's true. I think it spanned over three years published for over thirty years.

RINGGENBERG: Joe, you've done a lot of war stories. Is there still any type of war story that you've wanted to do, but haven't attempted?

KUBERT: Well, it's funny you should bring that up. It's not one perhaps that I've particularly wanted to do, but as it worked out I'm doing another Sgt. Rock book right now. Brian Azzarello is writing it. It's going to be 120 pages in length; an over-sized hardcover, and I'm just starting it.

RINGGENBERG: Is the large printing size going to

MI DISPIACE, BARRETT, MA IL VOSTRO DOLORE NON PUO' IMPEDIRE IL CAMMINO DELLA GIUSTIZIA. VI DICHIARO IN ARRESTO PER L'ATTACCO AL RANCH DI HIRAM NORRIS!
EHI! E'A APPESANTO CARO
FERMI! VOI NON LA FATE FRE-DDO NIEN TE!

affect how you do the art?

KUBERT: I don't think so.

RINGGENBERG: You've seen a lot of changes in the way the art was done, do you prefer doing large-size originals or the 11x17 that's the current standard?

KUBERT: You adapt or you can get accustomed to almost anything. I had always preferred working large. I was accustomed to working larger because that was the size of comic book art when I started years ago. I learned to know what fifty percent reduction would look like. The larger size was twice up, the smaller size is about a third up. You adapt. I've not found any real difficulty with that.

RINGGENBERG: Are you able to work faster in the smaller size?

KUBERT: I don't think so. I was able to work at a pretty good rate full size. So I don't think that the size makes that much difference.

RINGGENBERG: How do you approach drawing a page? Describe how you go from blank page to finish.

KUBERT: Normally, when I read through the script I will make some thumbnail sketches to see how I want the panel sequence to work, to make sure that the dramatics are clear and effective. So I'll make one small thumbnail sketch per page, then I just get on to the big paper.

RINGGENBERG: Okay, well I'm going to fast forward here. You established your school in 1976. When you started, did you ever think it would still be going twenty-six years later?

KUBERT: No. I think it's a pleasant surprise that it has stayed and done as well as it has.

RINGGENBERG: In twenty-six years how many students have you turned out?

KUBERT: Oh God. I don't know. I don't keep a count in my head.

RINGGENBERG: Well what would be a typical class size in a particular year?

KUBERT: We usually have anywhere from perhaps a hundred and fifty, two hundred students per year.

RINGGENBERG: For your facility, didn't you buy an old high school?

KUBERT: Yeah. We have the old high school here in town. It's the same school all my kids, my sons and my daughter had attended when they went to high school. It was the last place in the world I ever expected to own.

RINGGENBERG: That must seem odd to your sons to be going there for your school.

KUBERT: Both Adam and Andy attended and graduated from my school. It was at the mansion, the old school that they had attended. Adam and Andy have their studios here and they're teaching at the school now, so it is a little strange, I guess. I think they've become accustomed to it however.

RINGGENBERG: Did you want your sons to become cartoonists, or was that totally their choice?

KUBERT: To me it's just a miracle that they pursued this as a career. Not only that they've turned out to be cartoonists, but

MI DISPIACE, BARRETT, MA IL VOSTRO DOLORE NON PUO' IMPEDIRE IL CAMMINO DELLA GIUSTIZIA. VI DICHIARO IN ARRESTO PER L'ATTACCO AL RANCH DI HIRAM NORRIS!

that they've turned out to be as good as they are. I think they've gone way beyond anything that I did at that same age.

RINGGENBERG: Do you enjoy working with them?

KUBERT: I love it. It's my greatest pleasure. Whenever I have an opportunity that they want me to do some inking where I can help them out, it's my greatest pleasure.

RINGGENBERG: It really seemed like early on that Adam's work resembled yours a lot.

KUBERT: (Laughs) I can't speak to that. (Laughs) It's hard for me to say. I guess like other artists have influenced me, I'm sure there are a lot of people, including me that have influenced both Adam and Andy.

RINGGENBERG: Among all the people you've had as students who made the biggest impression on you as far as their talent?

KUBERT: There have been a good number of them. I hesitate to say names for fear that I'm going to leave some names out, but there've been some really terrific people that have come out of the school. But what I admire about these people is the attitudes—their motivation, their complete dedication to what it is that they want to do. I can't begin to tell you the problems that a lot of these guys have with money, with being away from home for the first time, the kind of pressures that they're under, doing the amount of work that they have to do in order to be able to attend the school. Putting in heavy hours, because of money problems, having to work at the same time, which is really a drain. Still they've done it. Still they've worked at it, and still they've come through. That I think is what I admire about them.

RINGGENBERG: I saw from the interview you did with Bill Baker that you've taken over the *P.S.* magazine contract.

KUBERT: Yep.

RINGGENBERG: Boy that must be a great training ground for your students.

KUBERT: It's a terrific opportunity for the students. It's really great for me, especially since Will Eisner is the guy who started the magazine fifty years ago. Before I took the magazine on, I spoke to Will about it and I talked to Murphy Anderson, who subsequently took it over from Will. It's a big, big kick working on this stuff, especially after guys like that.

RINGGENBERG: Oh, yeah. Now, *P.S.* is a monthly and it's just for military, correct?

KUBERT: Sixty-four pages a month. I think that civilians can pick it up. The Army has a web site. Civilians can acquire it. Essentially it's a manual. It's a publication that tells the guys in the service how to maintain their vehicles, their arms, etc. All the mechanical stuff that they work with, how to maintain them to keep them going.

RINGGENBERG: What do you base the stories on? Does the Army send you out manuals?

KUBERT: The Army sends out the initial material. They have ten knowledgeable editors at Redstone Arsenal down in Alabama that supply us with the essential information that they want to disseminate. We, in turn, convert that into stories and illustrations. Humorous things that make it enjoyable, entertaining reading.

RINGGENBERG: Do you

ever take the students out on field trips, like to Fort Dix to look at tanks or anything?

KUBERT: No. The Army supplies us with all the reference that we need. The students at the school here do go out on trips to museums, to Frank Frazetta's museum out in Pennsylvania. But the

guys who work on the Army magazine do not.

RINGGENBERG: How many students are working on it right now?

KUBERT: I don't know the number off-hand.

RINGGENBERG: Is it a large number, or...

KUBERT: Not really. And no student is permitted to work on the Army material if they're not doing well in school. I'm (pause) is what they came here for—to learn through the ten-course curriculum that's given here. And unless they're doing well in those classes, I don't care how good they are, they can't involve themselves with anything with which I have anything to do.

RINGGENBERG: What do the students do on the magazine? Are they doing pretty much everything?

KUBERT: Yeah. Penciling, inking, some working on computers, doing the coloring.

RINGGENBERG: Do you try to give your students the same kind of all-around background you received?

KUBERT: That's the whole idea.

RINGGENBERG: So you expect your students to be halfway decent letterers for instance?

KUBERT: It's got to be that way or else there's no insurance that they'll be able to make a livelihood over an extended period of time. What we try to do is to give them enough of a varied education so that should any part of the business slow down, if they have more pencilers than they know what to do with, then they can be inking. If they have more inkers, then they can be penciling and doing layouts. If they need coloring, if they need more people to work on computers, if they need lettering, if the publisher and agencies need people for any part of the business, that's what we teach in the ten-course curriculum. But also very important, what we tell them is that they have to be working on attaining a professional attitude. That is, when they come out of here, they have to know what the business is about, how to speak to people, how to work in a professional manner, how to handle deadlines, which is critical with any guy coming into the business. That's what we push in the courses that we give.

RINGGENBERG: Let me let you wrap up here with one last question.

KUBERT: Sure.

RINGGENBERG: Will the *Tex Willer* album you did be/has be published here in the States in English?

KUBERT: I believe that it's in the process of being done right now. There's a publisher that's going to be doing it, but I have to say a name because I don't think it's a set deal yet. Leastways, I haven't been told about it. But I have done four separate covers for the four chapters that were in that Tex book. That's for the foreign publishers—there are a number of foreign publishers that will be publishing it as well. Outside of Italy. France, Spain, Norway.

RINGGENBERG: Was it fun getting back in and doing a western again?

KUBERT: Yeah, it was. The only bad part about it was that it took me five or six years to do it. I had told the publisher: Sergio Bonelli, who had the patience of three saints, that it would take me at least three years to do it when I accepted the job. Of course, I'm here involved with a lot of stuff and this was 224 pages of material, but it took more than five or six years.

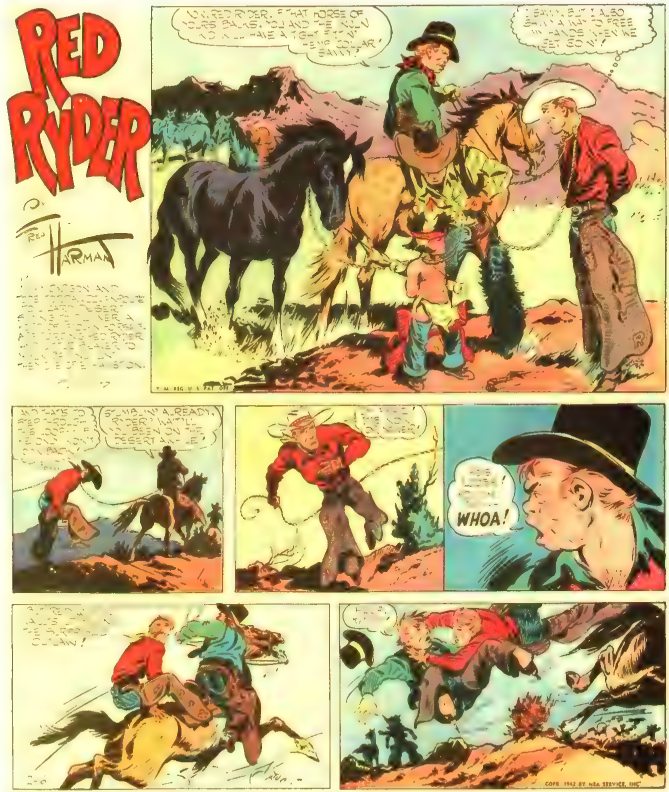
RINGGENBERG: Were you squeezing in the pages when you had time?

KUBERT: Oh yeah. And so it took me, under those circumstances, it took me about five or six years or more to finish the whole thing.

RINGGENBERG: I look forward to seeing it.

KUBERT: It looks pretty good, I think.

RED RYDER
THE BOAT IS LOADED AND WE'RE READY TO SHOVE OFF... I'M SENDING FARRON ALONG TO SEE THAT YOU GET ON BOARD SAFELY!
AND FARRON...
THE BOAT'S LOADED AND WE'RE READY TO SHOVE OFF... I'M SENDING FARRON ALONG TO SEE THAT YOU GET ON BOARD SAFELY!
AND FARRON...
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
WHAT'S THE MATTER?



December 4, 1949.

The strip was distributed by the NEA Syndicate and was featured in newspapers all over the country, especially in the western states. Most papers ran the strip full-page size until the wartime paper shortages and the additional paid advertisements persuaded the syndicates to start shrinking the size of most strips.

RED RYDER
Fred Harman
NOW WE HAVE FOUND OUR GRANDSON. WE TAKE HIM HOME TO BE ONE OF OUR ANCESTORS!
WE MUST MAKE HASTE BEFORE WE ARE FOLLOWED! OUR OWN WICKED BOY MUST NEVER SEE HIS PURPOSE AGAIN!
HE NO PAPOOSE! HE LITTLE BEAVER! LET ME OUTA HERE! YOU MAKE-UM MISTAKE!
WHAT WON'T BE EAST... WITH A WEST START SO ME?
I FOUND YOU! YE LET OUR GRAND BOY GO! YE SHALL NOT GO ANY MORE!
WE ARE HOME AT LAST! A KNOWN ONLY TO ME! I MUST BE YOUNG ONE TO SLEEP BEFORE WE ARRIVE!
HELP US, WOMAN! MAKE HE SLEEP NO TRICK!
YES! HE MUST NOT KNOW THE SECRET TRAIL WE TAKE FROM HERE!

August 1, 1943.

Hal Foster, Burne Hogarth and Alex Raymond pioneered the use of "big panels" in their Sunday pages, and collectors today prize pages that feature them. But in the middle 1940s, as strips like **Red Ryder**, **Tarzan** and **Flash Gordon** were cut down to half-page size, the "big panels" would disappear. Sunday comics would never be quite the same after these reductions. Fred Harman left the **Red Ryder** strip around 1960 and became a celebrated painter of western scenes.

100 SUPER SPECTACULAR PAGES 100

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

Joe Kubert

OR BATTLES DINOSAURS IN THE YEAR 1,000,000 B.C.!

SEE SERGENT ROCK AND EASY COMPANY WAGE WAR AGAINST THE NAZIS IN "OUR ARMY AT WAR!"

PLUS

ENEMY ACE
PILOT EXTRAORDINAIRE

EXTRA! KUBERT'S BRILLIANT RENDITION OF THE LORD OF THE JUNGLE!

WHAT MAKES A G.I. FINALLY QUIT AND REFUSE TO FIGHT?

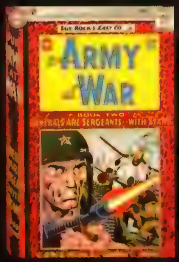
NOT FADE AWAY

AN INTERVIEW WITH JOE KUBERT

Conducted by Bill Baker

There's an old adage which states that "old soldiers never die, they just fade away." Still, if one looks at the comics arena as a battle ground, and its longer-lived practitioners as veterans, there's a fair number of them who put the lie to that cliché. If you then chose to further narrow the field down to include only those few who have made an indelible mark upon the field not only with superheroes, but also in the genre of war comics, you'd quickly end up with a yet smaller gathering of distinguished worthies. Still, it's probably a fairly safe bet to say that the subject of this feature, Joe Kubert, would be one of the real standouts among this elite company of highly decorated lead and ink slingers.

Never one content to rest on his laurels, Kubert has continued to steadily hone his craft by regularly plying his trade almost every day since he entered the comics business 65 or so years ago at the tender age of 11. During that time he's made numerous and significant contributions to the field as an artist, leaving an indelible stamp on an incredible stable of classic characters—ranging from Hawkman (both Silver and Golden Age) to those battle-weary warriors known as Sgt. Rock of Easy Company and Baron Von Hammer, the World War I German enemy ace pilot known as the Hammer of Hell—as well as his own creations, such as Tor and Abraham Stone, and the very moving graphic novel *Fax from Sarajevo*. In addition, he's also a pioneering educator and founder of the only fully accredited US school that specializes in teaching the practical aspects of creating comic books.

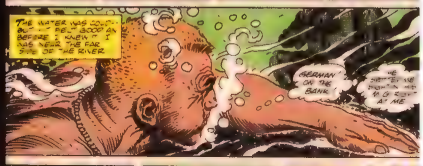


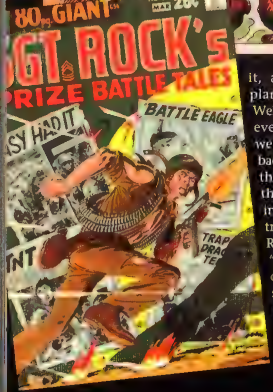
Considering that there's much, much more to come from this dynamic and personable artist in both the immediate and far future, it seems quite apt to note that Kubert is surely one comics veteran who'll ...

Comic Book Marketplace: You recently announced that you will be returning to work on a character, Sgt. Rock, with which you've enjoyed a long history. What prompted this decision?

Joe Kubert: I guess it was happenstance. I've always been in contact with DC, and having spoken to Karen Berger, who's the editor of Vertigo up at DC, and my association and relationship with Paul [Levitz], I was given [this opportunity].

I was given to understand that they were going to do a series of *Sgt. Rock* comic books, and they had asked me if I would do the covers for it. I said, "Sure, that sounds fine to me. But I'd like to know a little bit more about


THE WATER WAS COLD!... THE BLOOD ON MY HANDS WAS MINE! I WAS NEVER THE FAIR FISH OF THE RIVER.
HEAVEN'S ON THE BEAM!
THE FIRST TIME I'VE EVER HAD TO LOOK UP AT ME.



it, and what's the plan," and so on. Well, before that was even determined, we were bantering back and forth, and the idea came up that I might be interested in illustrating a new Sgt. Rock story. I said, "Well, it depends on the circumstances, the writing and the presentation—the type of project," and so on. And so we came up with the suggestion of Brian Azzarello doing the writing, [which] he agreed to, and it was great. He's an *excellent* writer, and I thought he'd do a terrific job. I've been reading his *100 Bullets* and *Hellblazer* and enjoying them very much.

The format is going to be a hardcover. It will be approximately 130 pages in length. *That* interested me. It's a little more legitimate, and is more like a bookstore item, rather than just [being] limited to comic books. With all that in mind, and coming back to a character I knew pretty well, and one that, under these circumstances I was kind of interested in doing, we all went ahead on it.

CBM: And when do you think that might be released?

Kubert: In all probability, early next year. I have a kind of...how shall I say it?...a flexible deadline. In all probability, it will be out by the *very* end of this year, beginning of next.

CBM: Well, in the meantime, there are a number of DC Archive editions coming out featuring Sgt. Rock and a number of the other characters you've been associated with over the years.

Kubert: Yeah. I guess if you live long enough, you can fall into that category. [General laughter]

CBM: That's not too surprising, considering that you've had literally a lifelong association with a number of major characters, from Hawkman and others in the Golden Age, all the way up to the Silver Age and beyond.

Kubert: Yeah. I've been a very lucky guy.

ONCE THE FRENCHMAN ALLOWED ME TO SET INTO POSITION ABOVE AND BEHIND HIM—HE WAS KAPUT! JUST AS CERTAINLY AS IF HE HAD PUT HIS NECK UNDER THE GUILLOTINE'S AXE! FOR I HAVE BEEN TRAINED TO KILL!

CBM: We've *all* been blessed by your luck, then!

Kubert: Thank you.

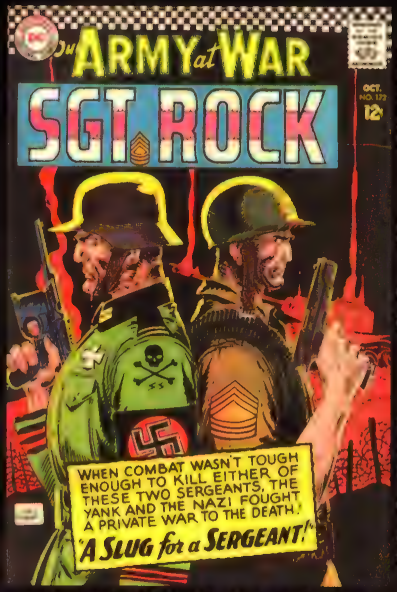
CBM: Well, what do you think about the whole idea of these Archives at this point? I mean, you must feel a bit gratified by it.

Kubert: It *is* gratifying to know that the characters *can* continue, and be published for—perhaps, hopefully—a new and wider audience. But, beyond that, I think that there is also an attempt to put the books and these characters in another market and another venue. And I think that's a terrific idea. And I think expanding into bookstores, which is what they're doing with the Archives, I think it's an excellent idea.

CBM: Do you think that Sgt. Rock, and war comics in general, are still relevant in this day and age—or are they perhaps even more relevant than ever?

Kubert: You hit a *very* sensitive spot with me, because I really don't know. [General laughter] *Hopefully*, if the stuff is good enough, it'll have enough strength to circumvent time and perhaps interest a new audience, a new group of young readers. I'm constantly surprised, and very gratified, by the reports and calls that I get from people who have not read Sgt. Rock regularly for a long time, but still remember the character, and tell me how real and effective the stories were.

Incidentally, the kudos for *that* go to Bob Kanigher who was essentially the creator and the writer [of the series]. I did write a couple of later stories, but Bob was really the guy who


OUR ARMY at WAR
SGT. ROCK
OCT. NO. 177
12¢
WHEN COMBAT WASN'T TOUGH ENOUGH TO KILL EITHER OF THESE TWO SERGEANTS, THE YANK AND THE NAZI FOUGHT A PRIVATE WAR TO THE DEATH!
"A SLUG for a SERGEANT!"

created the whole thing. And I think that the stories still stand up. And I think the reason for that is because they weren't just purely war stories, but kind of people-type stories. The Sgt. Rock character was a very believable character. Gosh, I remember us getting letters from guys in the army who felt that there was a *real* Sgt. Rock. So, hopefully, that'll still hold true with a new audience.

CBM: While I know that you weren't the first artist to draw Rock, you had a lot of input into the design and nature of the character. What was that process like?

Kubert: Ross Andru, I think, had done the first story. But beyond that, the character really developed over a long period of time. I guess it's like getting to know someone really well. At any given point, and I think that Bob Kanigher felt the same way, the character dictated the kind of stories in which he would appear—and *how* he would *react* and *act* in those stories.

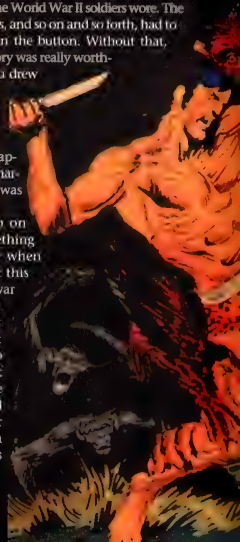
CBM: How much reality was involved in the creation of the stories? Can you say one way or the other if Bob's stories were based upon any research into specific battles and such?

Kubert: Were they based on actual fact? Well, I think not. I think that Bob had used a lot of jumping off points from battles that had occurred, or areas of battles in which they had occurred. But for the main part I think most, if not all, of the stories were strictly imagination.

CBM: How important were real world references as far as you were concerned as an artist?

Kubert: Oh, references were and are *extremely* important. It's important in *any* story, because if you don't use references properly [it has no real foundation]. You know, the stories themselves are usually so imaginative and off the wall that you've got to connect with something so that the reader can say, "Yeah, this could actually happen." If your backgrounds, if the place that the action's taking place are not credible and not believable, then the whole story is just a waste of time because it's just not a believable story and they put no weight on the characters themselves.

So, yeah, reference [was very important]. Guns had to actually look like the guns used. The uniforms had to look like what the World War II soldiers wore. The tanks, the airplanes, and so on and so forth, had to be pretty much on the button. Without that, then the whole story was really worthless. Because if you drew an airplane that didn't look like an airplane, nobody would believe *anything* that was happening, least of all the character with whom it was happening.



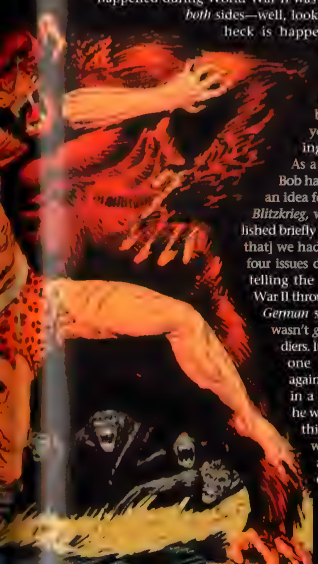
CBM: To follow up on that thought, and something you mentioned earlier when you noted the fact that this wasn't so much about war but the people involved, one of the things about these stories that lent them such power has to do with the fact that people *died* in these books, and that the real consequences of war were clearly depicted in these tales. That was

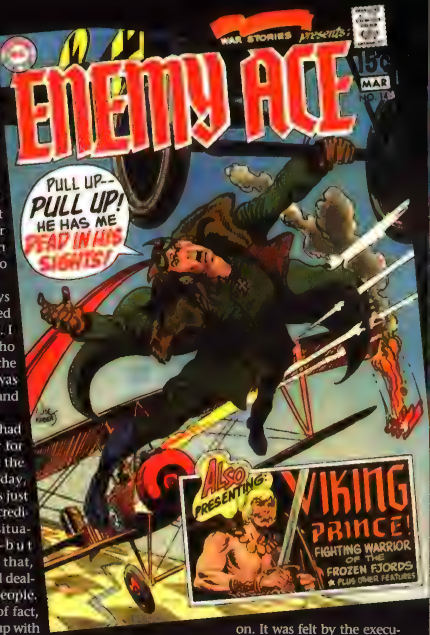
pretty unusual in those days, wasn't it?

Kubert: I think so. It was, I think, Bob's and my attempt to show that this was no fun time, no playtime, and that war *stinks*. It just is not a good thing to happen, not a good thing to *be* in. And what we tried to do—what Bob tried to do, what I tried to do when I was writing the stuff—was to show that these people in the army weren't there because they liked killing people, but because something was happening and it meant they had to be there in order to defend their country. Not flag waving, but just a situation where you find yourself doing what you have to do. *Not* a happy thing, but you *have* to do it.

CBM: Right, and along with that, you guys didn't depict the opposing forces as a demonized enemy, if I can use that term, for the most part. I mean, there were a few truly evil individuals who showed up on the other side of the trenches, like the Iron Major, but for the most part the enemy was depicted in a way that was just as human as Rock and the rest of Easy Co.

Kubert: Well, I think despite the fact that what had happened during World War II was a horror for *both* sides—well, look at what the heck is happening today, which is just an incredible situation—but beyond that, you're still dealing with people. As a matter of fact, Bob had come up with an idea for a book called *Blitzkrieg*, which was published briefly [despite the fact that] we had about three or four issues done. But it was telling the story of World War II through the eyes of a *German* soldier. Now, it wasn't *glorifying* the soldiers. It was [about] this one soldier who, again, found himself in a situation where he was doing a lot of things that he wasn't too happy about, with the cruelties and so on. It was felt by the executives at DC at that time that it was just too hot a subject to [continue] work on it. So, despite the fact that we had three or four issues done, it was discontinued.





CBM: Well, that leads beautifully into a discussion of another beloved character that you helped create with Bob, but which was fairly controversial when it first hit the stands: the Enemy Ace. How'd that come about, and did that result from the same kind of impulse that created *Blitzkrieg*?

Kubert: No, I don't think so. Enemy Ace was Bob's creation. I did write several of the stories later on, but Bob was the one who really put the thing together initially. And it was a different kind of war, and time. It was almost, perhaps, a pace or two behind knights going into battle, especially the war in the air. There were all kinds of stories about World War I pilots that would be waving to each other, and saying, "Hello!" and then shooting each other down. It was like a jousting field. So I don't

FROM OUT OF THE SUN A PACK OF BRITISH SPITFIRES ARE ON ROUTINE PATROL SUSPECTING ZERO-ZERO-NOTHING ... WHEN SUDDENLY ... SO EAL DEATH IS THERE ANY!
WARNER, WATCH OUT!
IN SECONDS FLAMES OF SMOKE AND FLAME SPEW FROM THE FABRIC-COVERED FUSELAGES OF TWO OF HIS MORE YOUNG PILOTS.

think you can really compare the Enemy Ace, Von Hammer, to the characters in World War II.

CBM: Right. That was probably one of the last instances of what might be called "A Gentlemen's War."

Kubert: Yeah. And look where we are now.

CBM: Yeah, there's nothing too gentlemanly about a lot of the conflicts going on these days.

Well, with that thought in mind, I've always gotten the impression that very often what you've tried to do with the war genre is show that, even when you are forced to resort to violence, there still needed to be some boundaries and some basic moral rules about conduct during wartime. In other words, despite the fact that war is hell, you don't need to embrace the devil or lose yourself in killing. Do you think that's a fair assessment?

Kubert: Up to just recently, to some extent there have been so-called "rules of war," which is almost an oxymoron. [Wry laughter] Yeah, to have some sort of a semblance of humanity, even when you have the inhumanity of war [is part of it]. If you're asking if the stories *need* the kind of violence that they do have, yes, I believe they do. And I think that violence is something that's important to almost any story that you do. Now, violence can take the form of physical violence, it can take the form of emotional violence, [but] there has to be some sort of conflict. But the violence mustn't be gratuitous.

I don't know if I answered your question, but that's the way I feel about it.

CBM: What do you hope that people will get from these Archives?

Kubert: Well, I was very pleasantly surprised to know that DC wanted to put these out in Archive form, and to put some stuff together that kind of reflects what I did when I started, and stuff like that. My tendency when I'm doing work—in fact, even currently, if I'm working on something on my [drawing] table—I tend to forget completely and totally what I did the week before, much less the year or decades before. So when DC decided that they wanted to do this that was great for me. I *thought*. Because I must tell you I felt kind of queasy when I started to look at the old stuff. It kind of made me tingle a little bit. Not with pride, but a little bit, you know, "God, did I do this stuff? Did I actually draw these things?" [General laughter]

Other than that, I'm only hoping that *perhaps* the audience who will be seeing these Archive books today will have a bit of the kind of reaction that people did when they first saw the stuff about 40 or 50 years ago. But it's really hard for me to judge. *Very* difficult for me to judge [that].

CBM: I think one of the main differences, too, aside from the basic fact that you have improved in your craft over the years, is the idea that you were

my property. And there are certain things that I could do, and there are a lot of other things I *can't* do because it belongs to somebody else. And, as I say, that's one of the reasons I think probably [when it comes to] a property like *Tor*, and other things that I own, I have more of a liking for, because I have more freedom with them.

CBM: Would it also be fair to say that it's also a truer distillation of your worldview, at least as it was at the point when you were working on it?

Kubert: Well, actually Tor, as I've said before several times, was my incarnation of Tarzan in a cave. When I was a kid, when I started having an interest in cartooning, the *Tarzan* strip by Hal Foster was one that really gave me the impetus to be a cartoonist. When I initially worked on the Tor character, I felt that I *could* equate—kind of a stretch—the emotions and feelings, some of the things that

1,000,000 YEARS AGO!!
SEE THE TITANIC BATTLE BETWEEN MAN AND THE PREHISTORIC BEASTS IN THE WORLD OF A MILLION YEARS AGO
No. 1
TEN CENTS
Joe Kubert
1,000,000
YEARS AGO!
EDITED BY JOE KUBERT AND NORMAN MAURER

often laboring under very tight deadlines and might not have had as much time as you'd have liked to work on them.

Kubert: Yeah, but that's really no excuse! [General laughter] For some of the stuff I did, that's really no excuse.

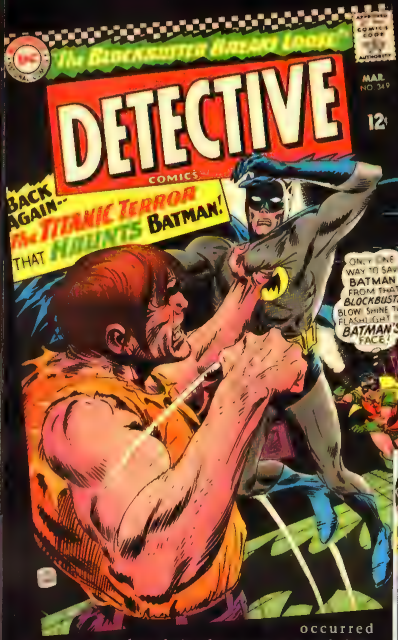
CBM: Well, late last year DC released *Tor*, which is also the first volume of the *Joe Kubert Library*.

Kubert: Right.

CBM: From my understanding, this is probably the character you're most fond of.

Kubert: Yeah. It also happens to be one of the characters that is still my property. And I have a fondness for it not only because it's my property, but since it was and still is [mine], I'm able to do pretty much what I feel [with it]. Working on other people's properties means that I have [to follow their rules].

For instance, with Sgt. Rock I have a great deal of leeway, having done it for such a long time. But it's still not



occurred perhaps during the caveman era, with those things that happen with people today. That was my attempt, anyhow. To show that people *don't* change a heck of a lot. That people are essentially and basically the same—*all* people are the same. That was kind of the thought in my head when I did the *Tor* [books].

CBM: How much did your partner in that enterprise, Norm Maurer, contribute to *Tor*? I ask, because you're both listed equally in the book, and I was wondering how your partner and you worked on that project.

Kubert: Norm was, in addition to being my partner, a very dear friend. Our friendship began when we started off in high school together. And my working with him had always been a pleasurable experience.

It was an odd kind of a relationship. I guess it was almost like a marriage between Norm and I. By that I mean Norm kind of respected me and didn't prod or poke into what I was trying to do, or the direction that I was intending. Rather, he would perhaps make tangential suggestions on how I might improve it, but there was never a put-down. Just as my reaction was to *his* work.

His approach to the Three Stooges and similar subjects was in a humorous vein. I admired him tremendously and still do. I think that Norm was probably one of the few certifiable geniuses in our business. But I think one of the reasons we were able to work well together was because we *helped* each other—like a marriage—we helped each other with suggestions, advice, directions, rather than tear each other down, or try to alter or *change* the things that we were doing. We kind of propped each other up, which I always appreciated.

I miss him. I really miss him.

CBM: His *Wizard of Ugh* feature was—and still

CBM: And they were just a ton of fun. The whole idea that a kid might be able, through his dreams, to go back in time and participate directly in ancient events like that really is a neat hook, too.

I know that you've thought about doing *Tor* in a wide variety of mediums, from comic strips to a cartoon show, over the years, but I was wondering if you ever might return to the series and craft some new tales someday?

Kubert: Possibly. If I live that long! [General laughter] I say that only because I'm involved now with the Sgt. Rock [book], that's going to take me about a year to do. I've got other things [I'd like to get to as well]. There were a couple of *Abraham Stone* books that I'd done before that were distributed throughout Europe. Another character that I'd put together, I'd like to get back to that sometime. And I would like to get back to *Tor* again.

Every time I've returned to the Tor character, after a couple of years of not having done it, it is with a fresher outlook, or perhaps a little bit different approach. So, yeah, I would look forward to doing it.

CBM: Well, I did want to touch on some of the other projects that you've been doing for the past few years, particularly those you've worked on since *Fax from Sarajevo*, which was a major book in more ways than one. For instance, did you ever finish that epic western you'd been working on for a few years?

Kubert: Oh, yeah. That's been published. That was *really* a labor. I felt sorry for the publisher. He waited for about six or seven years until I finished the whole thing. That was 224 pages in length, and was published within the last four or five months in

is—hilarious stuff.

Kubert: Yeah.

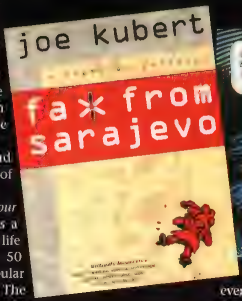
CBM: And there's another feature in there which is usually overlooked and, for me, really nailed one of the other aspects of the whole *Tor* project: *Danny Dreams*. This strip, where the title character goes back in time to experience things he's being taught, really hammered home for me the fact that you were really trying to sneak in some educational features along with the fun stuff.

Kubert: I did consciously attempt to do that [when] I was writing that stuff. As a matter of fact, the name Danny is my son's name. My son Danny was born at that time, and I decided that's what I'd like to do. But, yes, my attempt was, again, to kind of make it a little bit more credible, a little bit more believable, and I felt that by doing research the stories would work in that way. That they might be a little bit more effective.

Italy, and had terrific sales, as a matter of fact, I think it may be published in several of the other countries through Europe, and in the United States.

CBM: Please remind me, what was the title of that project again?

Kubert: *Tex: The Four Killers*. Tex [Willers] is a character that has had a life span in Italy of 40 or 50 years. It is *the* most popular comic book in Europe. The thing sells millions of copies a month, and has been going for over 40 years.



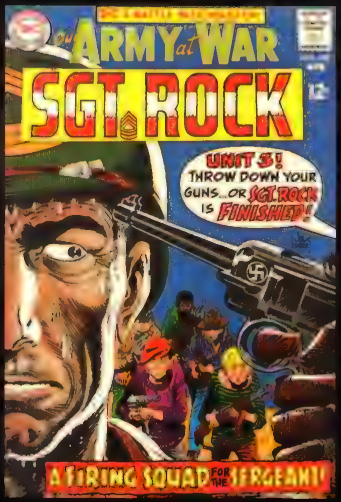
CBM: Who published that, and how did that project come about?

Kubert: The publisher's name is Sergio Bonelli. Sergio had contacted me, gosh, I guess about ten years ago and had asked me if I would do the *Tex* strip. He had contacted me even before that, and I said, "No, I'm too wrapped up with what I'm doing here, and it's not possible."

Sergio Bonelli was one of the men who had helped my friend, Ervin Rustemagic, get out of Sarajevo. And when Ervin got out, he had connected with Sergio and done some business with him. And [when] Sergio had asked again if I would do the *Tex* [project], Ervin had asked, also. I told him, "Look, it's going to take me three or four years to do this with all the other stuff I have." And Bonelli said, "That's OK with me!" But it took *twice* that length of time.

CBM: Well, that only proves that good things come to those who wait! [General laughter]

Kubert: Well, I thought it worked out pretty well. The writer, Claudio Nizzi, was excellent. He had written the story to me. That is, he asked before he even started to write it, what kind of stuff I would like to do, what were the things I'd like to see in this story. And I said, "One of the things is a change of season." So there was rain, heat, and so on.



CBM: At the end of your bio in the *Tor* Archive, it mentioned that you were working on an original graphic novel about the holocaust.

Kubert: Yes.

CBM: Is that project finished?

Kubert: Yes, it is, and it's at the publishers now. Yeah, that is an important book for me.

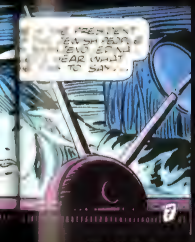
CBM: Would you like to talk about it a bit?

Kubert: Well, it's kind of a *very* personal thing, and I'd rather lay off it until it sees more of the light of day.

CBM: No problem. Is there anything else you've been working on that people might want to keep on the lookout for?

Kubert: Well, one of the things that might be of interest that I'm working on now is *PS Magazine*. I don't know if you've ever seen any of the army books, the *PS* books that Will Eisner used to produce, published by the Army. Did you know about that?

CBM: Yes. As a matter of fact, I interviewed Murphy



Anderson about his role in putting out that magazine last year.

Kubert: Right. Murph took it over after Will. Murph had worked with Will. Will had done the book for about 20 years, and had decided that he didn't want to do it anymore. Then Murph put in for the contract, and he got it for, I think, about 10 or 15 years.

Well, within the last two years it came up for bid again. I was not aware of it until I got a call from Neal Adams. Neal had been approached by somebody to do some work for the magazine. He then gave me a call and said, "Joe, do you know this thing is up for bid again? This thing would be great for you, and for the school!" I said, "Gee, thanks for telling me!" I then immediately called Will, and spoke to Murph about it, and they kind of prepared me as to what I should be expecting should this thing come through.

So, about a year and a half ago, we bid for the contract, and we got it. And for the last year and a half or so, we've been putting out this *PS Magazine* for the army, something that Will had started more than 50 years ago.

CBM: How are you working on that? Have you basically created an in-house studio in conjunction with the school?

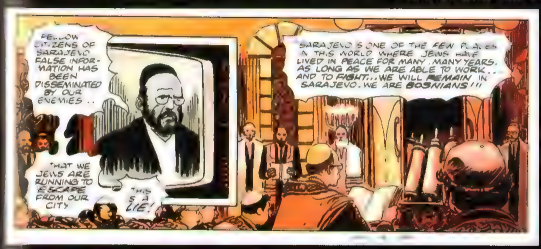
Kubert: Yeah. Well, I have an agency here at the school called Tell-A-Graphics, and we're working the whole thing through it. I'm involved with it quite a bit, as well, with other people. And we produce the whole magazine, it's 64 pages of material a month. The head honcho at Tell-A-Graphics is Pete Carlsson.

CBM: So you work on that in all your spare time, right? [General laughter]

Kubert: Well, that's in addition to the correspondence courses that we put out. The correspondence courses are doing very, very well. That's in addition to the other stuff I'm doing; I'm teaching here, as well. So I'm kind of occupied. [More general laughter]

CBM: Well, that leads up to my final question, which is: What do you get from all this, generally, and from creating your art, specifically?

Kubert: Ah, the greatest satisfaction and gratification I can think of. The *greatest*. At this stage in the game, to be able to be still involved is wonderful. What's even greater than that is the fact that people want me to do the work! I get calls from different publishers, I get requests [for work constantly]. I mean, this business with Sgt. Rock. I've done stuff for Marvel, and done stuff for DC. I've inked over my sons, Adam and Andy's work, which is the *greatest* pleasure in the world.


FELLOW CITIZENS OF SARAJEVO! FALSE INFORMATION HAS BEEN DISSEMINATED BY OUR ENEMIES..
THAT WE JEWS ARE RUNNING TO ESCAPE FROM OUR CITY!
THIS IS A LIE!
SARAJEVO IS ONE OF THE FEW PLACES IN THIS WORLD WHERE JEWS HAVE LIVED IN PEACE FOR MANY, MANY YEARS. AS LONG AS WE ARE ABLE TO WORK... AND TO FIGHT... WE WILL REMAIN IN SARAJEVO. WE ARE BOSNIANS!!!

But to still be *able* to do the work to the extent where people look forward to seeing the *stuff* I do. Geez, I couldn't think of a greater satisfaction. [Laughter] I'm working six days, seven days a week—and it's not work! I mean this is stuff that I love to do, and always have. How lucky can you get?

KUBERT

joe kubert

fax from sarajevo

SPIDER-MAN: Amazing!

by J.C. Vaughn

It's tough to put this into any sort of analytical perspective. This issue of *CBM* is getting ready to go to press just a few days after *Spider-Man* completed the biggest opening weekend in box office history—$114 million, or so they're saying. This piece won't reach readers for several weeks yet, so who knows how high the web will spin by that point? That's the future, though, and the financial success and critical success of a film aren't entirely tied together anyway, are they?

What will we think about *Spider-Man* when the dust settles?

Frankly, I don't know what history will say. And at the moment I don't care. Right now I just can't stop smiling.

Spider-Man is the best treatment a comic book character has ever received from Hollywood. If you love Spidey, I don't know how you cannot love this film and still be a reasonable person.

To be sure, there's plenty of room for nitpicking. They didn't have this small touch or that small touch, but only an idiot thinks they're going to fit 40 years of cherished ideas and memories into a two-hour movie. What director Sam Raimi, his cast and crew succeeded in doing was to capture the spirit of Stan Lee, Steve Ditko and John Romita, Sr. and distill it to its purest form.

The characters, their relationships, and the action are all standouts. The special effects are very good, but they don't dominate the story. They add to it. You know, like special effects are supposed to?

Tobey Maguire was great as Peter Parker, which of course he would have to be if he was going to be any good as Spidey. Kirsten Dunst was magical as Mary Jane Watson, and thank goodness we live in a time when she can simultaneously look both fashionable and just like John Romita would draw her. J.K. Simmons (*Oz*) got the biggest laughs with his portrayal of J. Jonah Jameson, and Willem Dafoe was wonderfully complex as Norman Osborn.

If by some stupid chance you haven't seen this movie yet, what are you waiting for?

BOX OFFICE MOJO
The Amazing Spider-Man indeed.

USA TODAY
Spider-Man has leaped from comic book to record book, becoming the first movie to hit $100 million in its first weekend.

BALTIMORE SUN
At its best, Spider-Man hits on the essential attraction of classic superhero comic books: the tear-streaked farce of youthful insecurity.

FOX NEWS
The live-action adaptation starring Tobey Maguire as the Marvel Comics web-slinger shattered box-office records with a $114 million debut, surpassing the previous best of $90.3 million taken in by Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone during its first three days last fall.

NEW YORK TIMES

The $114 million box-office gross for director Sam Raimi's adaptation of Spider-Man, the comic-book classic about a teenager turned web-slinging superhero, has smashed every record for opening-weekend ticket sales.

"This is an unqualified box-office record," said Paul Dergarabedian, chairman of Exhibitor Relations, a company in Los Angeles that monitors ticket sales. "Nothing has even come close. The enormity of this cannot be overstated."

The movie, released by Columbia Pictures, sold $39.7 million in tickets Friday and $43.7 million Saturday, giving it both the biggest and second-biggest one-day totals.

The previous record was $33.5 million for the Saturday of the opening weekend of Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone last year.

Sam Raimi

Tobey Maguire

HOUSTON CHRONICLE

The first hour of Spider-Man confirms that Sam Raimi was the perfect choice to direct this $100 million movie incarnation of the Marvel Comics hero whose personal life is as tangled as his web.

FILM THREAT

After years of starts and stops, various legal wranglings, and an extended flirt with an Oscar-winning, self-professed "king of the world," the "Spider-Man" feature film has finally come to pass, and the long and winding path to the big screen has led to the right hands: those of director Sam Raimi, who has set the bar unusually high for the rest of the summer film season with this exciting and exhilarating adventure.

Raimi has gone on record as being a longtime fan of the character, and it shows in the film's remarkable fidelity not only to the source material but also the spirit of it. While the costumed alter ego that can do "whatever a spider can" gives the film and the comic its name, Raimi and screenwriter David Koepp have wisely focused on what has made the character such an enduring icon: the man behind the mask, Peter Parker. Unlike the alien-born Superman or the genetically evolved X-Men, Peter is just an average guy by nature; the amazing powers were thrust upon him by the fateful bite of an arachnid. The changes in him are more physical than anything else, a fact that comes out clearly in the casting of and the performance by Tobey Maguire; much like how everyman Maguire doesn't match the prototype of a screen action star, geeky and insecure Peter makes for a most unlikely superhero.

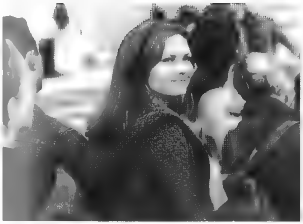
NEW YORK POST

The inspired casting of Tobey Maguire and the filmmakers' intelligent fidelity to the most appealing aspects of the original Marvel Comics character ensure that Spider-Man is a surprisingly charming and even witty match for the best of Hollywood's comic-book adaptations.

Director Sam Raimi and screenwriter David Koepp take the risk of letting a bittersweet teen romance loom almost as large in the story line as the lead character's crime-fighting struggles—and it pays off.

There are plenty of corny moments, but the level of camp is never allowed to overwhelm either the romance or the adventure.

And with its alienated teenage hero, there are times when Spider-Man seems to aspire to the profound darkness of the Frank Miller graphic novels that formed the basis of Tim Burton's Batman.



PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Comic book heroes leaping onto the big screen usually aren't as endearing as Spider-Man.

Brooding millionaire Batman and goody-two-shoes alien Superman might be the best known of cartoon crime fighters committed to celluloid, but shy, teen-age Peter Parker-turned-Spider-Man is the most dimensional and human hero to date.

LOS ANGELES TIMES

Spider-Man may look like an action comic come to life, but its best feature is its romance comic heart. It's that rare cartoon movie in which the villain is less involving than the love story.

Like any celebrity biography, Spider-Man is more interesting when its subject is struggling than after he succeeds—and of Spider-Man's renown there can be no doubt. Uncommonly popular since his comic-book creation by Stan Lee and Steve Ditko some 40 years ago, Spidey was conceived as a new kind of hero, very much a teenager with age-specific uncertainties and anxieties that having unusual powers did nothing to ease. But let Peter Parker, Spider-Man's alter ego, tell you himself in the voice-over that starts the film:

> **Who am I? You sure you wanna know? The story of my life is not for the faint of heart. If somebody said it was a happy little tale, if somebody told you I was just your average, ordinary guy, not a care in the world...somebody lied.**

Director Sam Raimi, a long-time Spider-Man fan, was once known for mainlining the kind of murky midnight sensibility that Tim Burton brought to the Batman films. Though he's used Burton's composer Danny Elfman, Raimi's tone here is distinctly sunny. And though his Spider-Man marks time more than it needs to and is no more than sporadically exhilarating, it does enough things right to be a solid comic-book citizen.

GREAT AMERICAN COMIC BOOKS BY RON GOULART

by Paul Gravett

Under a different title and cover, *Great American Comic Books* is an updated version of Ron Goulart's comprehensive book from 1991, rather awkwardly entitled *Over 50 Years of American Comic Books*. It's a much snappier title and his use of the adjective 'Great' puts this on the shelf with his two-volume *Great Comic Artists* and his *Great Comic Book History*.

From the outset, from the comics on the eye-popping cover, you get a flavor of the breadth of coverage within, as the vintage Katzenjammer Kids in *Tip Top Comics* rub shoulders with Mike Mignola's *Hellboy*, and a pre-Batman *Detective Comics* sits alongside the classic underground comix *Bijou Funnies*.

The original thirteen chapters are reprinted here, with the odd amendments, and rounded off with a new 24-page chapter to bring us up to date.

It is an ambitious task to survey the 20th century of American comic books, from their roots in early newspaper strip collections to the present day rise of the graphic novel. The challenge is to chronicle so many years of so many different kinds of comic books and to make the end result readable and entertaining, not just a phone directory of titles or lists of characters. Goulart tackles this challenge eminently well by bringing the industry's history to life, mixing the behind-the-scenes machinations of publishers and tell-tale sales figures with insightful analyses of key influential creators and memorable series. Certain significant figures enjoy a special one-, two- or three-page focus of their own: Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson, Siegel & Shuster, Bob Kane & Bill Finger, Carl Barks, Basil Wolverton, Matt Baker, Harvey Kurtzman and the EC Artists, Lev Gleason, Dick Sprang, Steranko and Crumb. Goulart gives other special pages over to such themes as sidekicks, superheroines, superpatriots, the Superman Family, supermovies, graphic novels, or to the distinctive and different, such as Katy Keene, Little Lulu, Howard the Duck and the Teenage Mutant Ninja millionaires Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird. It's an impressively broad sweep.

The problem with this approach, however, is that a lot of truly original creators and inspired comics obviously cannot be included, or can only be mentioned by name, presumably because they do not fit into the trends that Goulart explains so well. It is probably unavoidable, but it is still a shame that whole genres have to be so scaled down. Westerns stake out only one spread of fifteen covers from 1951-1954 and a single paragraph and caption. The massively popular romance genre does stretch to eight paragraphs, but most of these are devot-

Goulart gives equal coverage to all the antecedents to the comic book, including the ubiquitous Cupples & Leons, the pulps and more. He gets to superheroes on page 72.

(right) Trendy typography, detail shown, is limited to introductory areas, the bulk of the text is quite readable.

TOWARD THE MILLENNIUM

In the opening years of the final decade of the twentieth century, things looked rosy for the comic book industry. During the summer of 1991, for example, Marvel's new improved born-again *X-Men* #1—labeled *"A MUTANT Milestone"*—sold over eight million copies, making it the highest selling comic ever. Late in 1992 DC's *Superman* #75, which dealt with the Man of Steel's alleged demise, sold more than six million copies. Also in 1992 Image Comics, a line of creator-owned titles, made its debut, racking up seven-figure sales with such

ed to the pioneer team (in the USA at least), Joe Simon and Jack Kirby. A mere trio of early romance covers is all we see. It is good to see some modest acknowledgement of the crucial role of underground comix artists in breaking the Comic Code's infantilising taboos. On the other hand, the underground's championing of the creators' rights to own the copyright to their work has hugely influenced the evolution of comics since the Seventies and this is hardly mentioned.

The hardest history to write is the history going on in the present all around us. It's intriguing to see that back in the 1991 edition, in his last chapter, Goulart reflected the optimistic forecast by Maggie Thompson in *Comics Buyer's Guide* of robust comic book sales ahead of $400,000,000 and more. He predicted an 'interesting and challenging' decade ahead. He was certainly right there! Ten years on, in 2001, with the benefit of some hindsight, in a final section entitled 'Towards the Millennium,' he brilliantly navigates the booms and busts of the Nineties, explaining the speculator frenzy and subsequent disillusion and sales collapse following 'The Death of Superman' hype, and charting the torturous routes through the closure of all distributors except Diamond, and Marvel's eventual reprieve from bankruptcy. These are painful lessons that the industry may still not be learning.

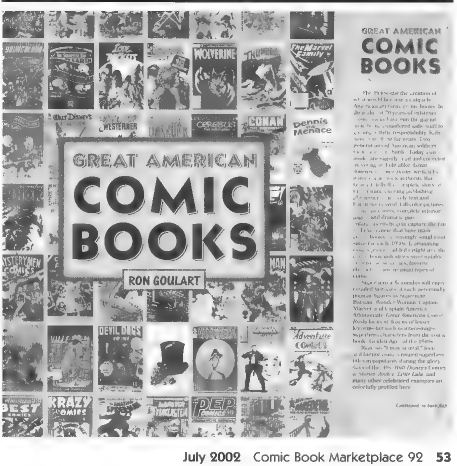
Goulart closes with the current state of the graphic novel phenomenon, acknowledging a well-chosen sample from Eisner's *Contract with God* and Spiegelman's *Maus* to Jeff Smith's *Bone*, as well as *From Hell*, *Sandman* and the latest works of Bagge, Seth, Clowes, Sacco and Ware. Looking ahead is always hard but Goulart rightly voices concern 'whether there will be an audience for kid-oriented comic books in another decade…since all sorts of new lively distractions have come along, such as playstations and computer games, to tempt young readers permanently away from comic books.' He is more hopeful, cautiously, for the future of graphic novels for adults.

At a suggested retail price of a reasonable $29.98, and at lower prices in various discount book outlets, this 344-page color hardback is an illuminating history, a valuable reference and an essential bargain that belongs in the library of every comic book collector of Platinum, Golden, Atom, Silver, Bronze, Modern or of whatever Age. ®

(above) Famous Funnies gets Goulart's nod as first modern format comic. These covers occupy two-thirds of a page, and show the loose, open layout the book uses but does not overuse.

(right) The attractive cover design is repeated on the dust jacket, shown is front cover and front flap of jacket.

Publications International Ltd, 344 9.5x12.5 inch pages, $29.98, ISBN 0-7853-5590-1



THE Greatest COMIC BOOK ever!

well...for this month at least

by Mark Squirek

Talk about imperial!!! The Guardians of the Galaxy on *Green Lantern* #40 almost seem small and ineffectual compared to the giant toga-clad Galactus on this cover. While the size of Galactus could be partially attributed to artistic perspective, the fact remains true; he is just one big Galactus!!

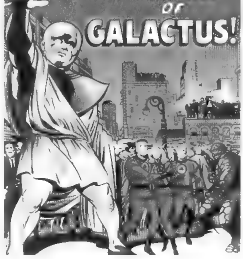
This is a Villain who could have easily popped up on *The Outer Limits*. The physical appearance is only a small step removed from what could be seen as "normal human." His strange, hypnotic stare is obviously designed to enslave earthlings and aliens alike. The great thing about the expression on the face of Galactus, is that we are not exactly sure which way he is going with his power. Like his smaller real life cousin, Yul Brynner, this man demands attention and commands authority. To be honest, he looks like he is trying to mentally command me to buy this book, while the Fantastic Four seem unsure of their course of action.

At the time this book came out, one of the most watched shows on television was *The Ed Sullivan Show*. Ed had thousands of acts appear over the course of his run. From jugglers to cabaret to movie stars and sports celebrities being introduced from the audience (Hello Rocky Colovito!), no aspect of entertainment went unacknowledged. The absolute best acts to ever appear on the show were the guys who could keep plates spinning continuously on slender poles. Each week I sat there in wonder as they ran from one end of the stage to the other, desperately trying to make sure that each and every plate spun properly atop it's appointed pole.

These plate-spinning heroes were the last remnants of vaudeville and the absolute best in the field, but they all paled next to Jack Kirby and Stan Lee. Take a look at the first six pages of this book and count the number of plates Jack and Stan have in the air.

The splash page itself has at least five plates in the air to start: 1) Black Bolt's brother, Maximus, has fired the Atmo gun, 2) The vibrations that are set up "CAN END ALL HUMAN LIFE ON EARTH," 3) every member of the FF and the Inhumans is in a life threatening state of imbalance, 4) Who is the "Silver Surfer," 5) Who is "Galactus"?

It only gets crazier from here—I marvel at the number of plates that are spinning. When the FF finally escapes the world of the Inhumans, the reader attempts to take a breather, but cannot. The action moves from external to internal, pushing the reader directly into his or her own feelings with a level of complication approaching Russian tragedy.



As the FF departs aboard their chartered jet, the reader doesn't follow them home. Instead, we are taken into deep space where a strange figure is riding the waves of the Cosmos on a surfboard. I love the narrative trick of using the Skrulls to establish the Surfer in the Marvel Universe. This brings the reader inside and helps create a feeling of anticipation for what is going to happen when the FF meet this new arrival in the Marvel Universe. It gets better. The Surfer is actually a Herald for something even greater than this being who can cruise through airless space on his own power. Where the Surfer goes, Galactus cannot be far behind. How powerful can Galactus possibly be?

On page ten, Kirby uses almost half the page to convey an extraordinary sense of urban panic. The city is going mad, but over in the right hand corner is a cop pointing directly at the reader. The cop's eyes are shielded, but the hand is pointing out with a crooked finger, almost accusingly. Just one of those small details that Kirby throws into his work. This is a detail that can mean a dozen things, or mean nothing at all. For most it may even go undetected, but just who or what is that cop pointing at outside of the panel?

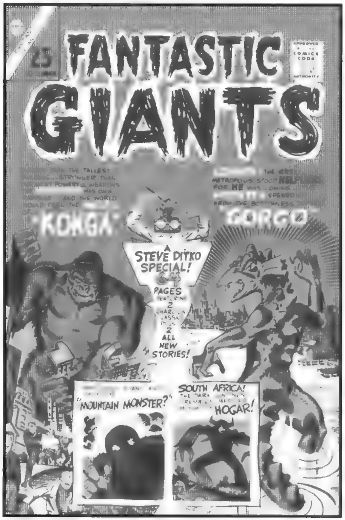
From civil unrest to the cosmos itself, Kirby swings between each location with authority and knowledge. Every aspect of what Kirby shows us seems like it can possibly exist. On page19, in a full-page mix of photos and art, Kirby somehow explodes the difference between the understandable reality of the reader's world and the comic book universe while still holding it together. Anything that can possibly happen, does.

How many characters can Stan Lee throw into a single book? There is no mathematical way to answer that question. It is obviously limitless. From the Inhumans, the Skrulls, the FF, the Silver Surfer, The Watcher, everyone has a moment to shine. What holds it together is the believable interaction of the Fantastic Four. Since they are so real to us, everything that surrounds them becomes real.

How can so much be possibly going on inside one single book? The answer is easy, it was created for us by Jack Kirby and Stan Lee.

Oddball Comics © 2002 by Scott Shaw! OBW02-6/02.

FANTASTIC GIANTS
ISSUE NUMBER: Vol. 2, No. 24
COVER DATE: September, 1966
PUBLISHER: Charlton Comics Group
COVER ARTIST: Steve Ditko



Cartoonist Steve Ditko is a legendary figure in the history of comic books...and one of the most elusive! Despite his stature as the creator or co-creator of such characters as Spider-Man, Dr. Strange, The Creeper, The Hawk and The Dove, the modern-day Blue Beetle and Mr. A, he is extremely reclusive when it comes to appearances in print or in public. Preferring to let his art speak for itself, Mr. Ditko has rarely been interviewed and, to my knowledge, no photograph of him has ever seen publication. Thanks to this cover, now we know why—poor Steve Ditko has an inkwell for a head! Hey, at least it's convenient!

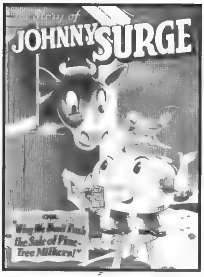
The book reprints Charlton's *Konga* #1 (1960) and *Gorgo* #1 (1961) both of which adapted films of the same titles and dates. Despite his bizarre cranial condition, Ditko did a masterful job of drawing both of these "fantastic giants." This giant-size comic also features two new stories by Ditko, "With The Help Of Hogar" (featuring a gigantic horned alien reminiscent of Marvel's "pre-hero" monster comics) and "The Mountain Monster."

ODDBALL Factoid: This one-shot reprint collection was actually the 24th issue of Charlton's *Konga* series.

THE STORY OF JOHNNY SURGE
ISSUE NUMBER: None
COVER DATE: April, 1953
PUBLISHER: Babson Bros. Co.
COVER ARTISTS: "Hen/E.R.R." (?)

Subtitled "Why We Don't Push The Sale Of Pine Tree Milkers," this 16-page giveaway comic was created to promote the sale of Surge cow-milking machines.

"As builders of both the Pine Tree and Surge Milkers, we present this bit of fantasy in the same vein as Aesop wrote his fables. We agree that animals and machines can't talk—but by giving them personalities we feel (as Aesop did) that they can help tell a story in a way that will be, at least, different."



And, talk about "different"! The back cover of this comic features an illustration of a chrome device that looks like a sex toy from Mars, accompanied by a blurb that happily, if innocently, announces: "A lot of People in a lot of Places like the SURGE!"

Yeah, and I'll bet a lot of those people like THE SURGE in a lot of places, too! Shiny, too—I haven't seen this much chrome since the last Robert Williams art show!

A lot of People in a lot of Places
Like the SURGE!
Ask your Neighbor about
Surge Money Making
Milking
BABSON BROS. CO.
2843 West Nineteenth Street Chicago, Ill. U.S.A.
SYRACUSE · MINNEAPOLIS · KANSAS CITY · LOS ANGELES · SEATTLE · TORONTO · HOUSTON · ATLANTA

ODDBALL Factoid: It should come as no surprise to anyone that this is the only comic book ever published to star an anthropomorphic cow-milking machine!

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One Good Apple Proves a Barrel's Worth

One of the commonly accepted tatters of cartooning lore is that *Mary Worth* began syndicated life as *Apple Mary*. At first blush, this seems an unlikely evolution. Mary Worth is a fashionably-attired little old gray-haired lady who is forever becoming involved in the romances of young men and women she meets as she rambles on through life. Apple Mary is a somewhat raggedy little old gray-haired lady who sells apples from a cart on a Chicago street corner during the early days of the Depression in the 1930s. She fusses around in other people's lives, too, but is mostly absorbed with mere survival for her grandson Denny, who is crippled, and a cantankerous middle-aged hanger-on named Bill Biff.

The version of history that inspires this month's diatribe claims that Martha Orr, a niece of *Chicago Tribune* editorial cartoonist Carey Orr, started the comic strip that has always been dubbed the first soap opera strip. But she didn't start it as a soaper; and it isn't the first anyhow.

Orr's strip is the afore-mentioned *Apple Mary*, and it was launched in October 1934 and owed its being, doubtless, to a 1933 Frank Capra movie, *Lady for a Day*, which also starred a little old gray-haired lady who eked out a living during those hard times by selling apples from a cart she wheeled down the streets, broad and narrow. In her spare time, she helped everyone who stumbled into her path.

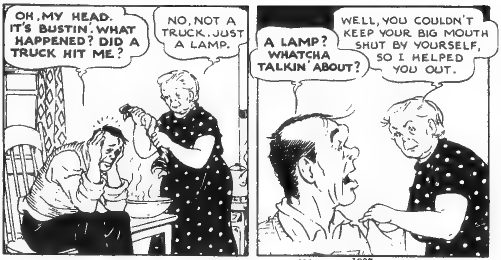
Orr had been born and raised, the third of six children, in Hillyard, Washington, where her father was a broker in lumber. Her uncle, recognizing her talent, brought her to Chicago and paid her way through the Art Institute. Soon thereafter, the Depression descended upon the nation, and Orr, after a decent interval, launched the apple-cart lady.

Martha Orr was not the first woman to draw a syndicated comic strip, but *Apple Mary* may have been the first comic strip with an all-girl orchestra. It was written and inked by Orr, penciled by Dale Conner, and lettered by Ruth Belew, a retired ballet dancer.

Orr eventually married a man named Hassel, and in 1939, she decided to give up the strip to devote her energies full-time to raising her family. Conner took over the drawing chores, and the syndicate recruited a new writer for the strip, a columnist on Ohio's *Toledo News-Bee* named Allen Saunders, who, in his off-hours, was writing *Big Chief Wahoo* (eventually re-titled *Steve Roper*), and Saunders turned the strip into *Mary Worth*. In the fall of 1942, Conner left and Ken Ernst came on board to do the drawing, which he continued to do until he died in August 1985.

Under the pen of several artists, Mary Worth evolved through the years from a street vendor to a dignified little old grandmotherly matron.

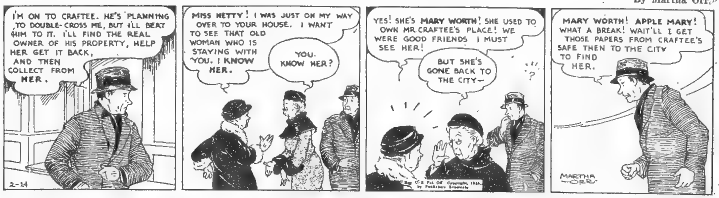
FUNNIES FARRAGO


OH, MY HEAD. IT'S BUSTIN'. WHAT HAPPENED? DID A TRUCK HIT ME?
NO, NOT A TRUCK. JUST A LAMP.
A LAMP? WHATCHA TALKIN' ABOUT?
WELL, YOU COULDN'T KEEP YOUR BIG MOUTH SHUT BY YOURSELF, SO I HELPED — YOU OUT.
COPYRIGHT 1937, PUBLISHERS SYNDICATE.

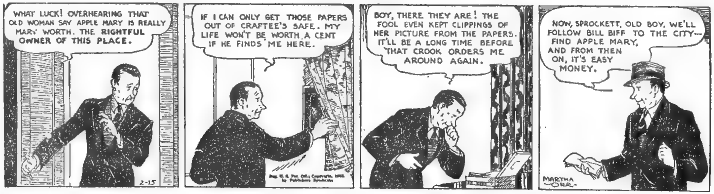
(left) Here's Martha Orr's Mary with her crusty side-kick, Bill Biff.

(below) Here, in strips from February 1935, within four months of **Apple Mary**'s launch, the pushcart peddler is clearly identified as Mary Worth, an heiress of means.

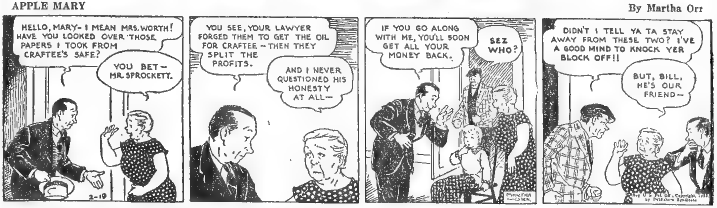
APPLE MARY — By Martha Orr


I'M ON TO CRAFTEE. HE'S PLANNING TO DOUBLE-CROSS ME, BUT I'LL BEAT HIM TO IT. I'LL FIND THE REAL OWNER OF HIS PROPERTY, HELP HER GET IT BACK, AND THEN COLLECT FROM HER.
MISS METTY! I WAS JUST ON MY WAY OVER TO YOUR HOUSE. I WANT TO SEE THAT OLD WOMAN WHO IS STAYING WITH YOU. I KNOW HER.
YOU KNOW HER?
YES! SHE'S MARY WORTH! SHE USED TO OWN MR. CRAFTEE'S PLACE! WE WERE GOOD FRIENDS. I MUST SEE HER!
BUT SHE'S GONE BACK TO THE CITY—
MARY WORTH! APPLE MARY! WHAT A BREAK! WAIT'LL I GET THOSE PAPERS FROM CRAFTEE'S SAFE THEN TO THE CITY TO FIND HER.
MARTHA ORR

APPLE MARY — By Martha Orr


WHAT LUCK! OVERHEARING THAT OLD WOMAN SAY APPLE MARY IS REALLY MARY WORTH. THE RIGHTFUL OWNER OF THIS PLACE.
IF I CAN ONLY GET THOSE PAPERS OUT OF CRAFTEE'S SAFE, MY LIFE WON'T BE WORTH A CENT IF HE FINDS ME HERE.
BOY, THERE THEY ARE! THE FOOL EVEN KEPT CLIPPINGS OF HER PICTURE FROM THE PAPERS. IT'LL BE A LONG TIME BEFORE THAT CROOK ORDERS ME AROUND AGAIN.
NOW, SPROCKETT, OLD BOY, WE'LL FOLLOW BILL BIFF TO THE CITY— FIND APPLE MARY, AND FROM THEN ON, IT'S EASY MONEY.
MARTHA ORR

APPLE MARY — By Martha Orr


HELLO, MARY— I MEAN MRS. WORTH! HAVE YOU LOOKED OVER THOSE PAPERS I TOOK FROM CRAFTEE'S SAFE?
YOU BET— MR. SPROCKETT.
YOU SEE, YOUR LAWYER FORGED THEM TO GET THE OIL FOR CRAFTEE — THEN THEY SPLIT THE PROFITS.
AND I NEVER QUESTIONED HIS HONESTY AT ALL—
IF YOU GO ALONG WITH ME, YOU'LL SOON GET ALL YOUR MONEY BACK.
SEE WHO?
DIDN'T I TELL YA TA STAY AWAY FROM THESE TWO? I'VE A GOOD MIND TO KNOCK YER BLOCK OFF!!
BUT, BILL, HE'S OUR FRIEND—

ONE GIRL VS. CRIME, INC.!
LOUIE BONETTI··· A BIG CITY'S MOST RUTHLESS AND POWERFUL RACKETEER!
FEAR FOR THE SAFETY OF THE FAMILY, HOWEVER, HAS KEPT HER SILENT··· DESPITE THE PLEAS OF JOHN BLACKSTON, DYNAMIC AND HANDSOME YOUNG ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY.
THE TESTIMONY OF LEONA STOCKPOOL, WHO LIVES WITH MARY WORTH, COULD BLAST!
BUT TODAY, BY A STRANGE TURN OF EVENTS, THE WHEEL OF DOOM STOPS ON BONETTI'S NUMBER···
LEONA! GO FOR A DOCTOR! AND HURRY!
WHAT IS IT, AUNT MARY? WHAT HAS HAPPENED?
LITTLE SUNNY IS ILL! I'M AFRAID IT'S SERIOUS!

Dale Conner gave Mary her first make-over when Orr left the strip in 1939, inking with a much more confident and liquid line. By the time of this strip (March 11, 1940), Saunders had changed the name of the feature to **Mary Worth's Family** as he moved Mary out from behind the pushcart into other people's lives.

That's the way the history books have it, but when Martha Orr died at the age of 92 on July 27, 2001, she unintentionally launched a minor ripple of controversy in the backwater of investigative comics research. In preparing Orr's obituary, the *Chicago Tribune* reporter who wrote it had the presence of mind to phone King Features, the syndicate currently distributing the strip, where he talked to an unnamed official who denied, oddly, that the two strips were at all related. *Mary Worth*, so this personage claimed, was a replacement strip that was offered to client newspapers when Mrs. Hassel retired in 1939. This bland denial immediately got comics scholars' wattles into an uproar: Apple Mary not Mary Worth? Who sez?

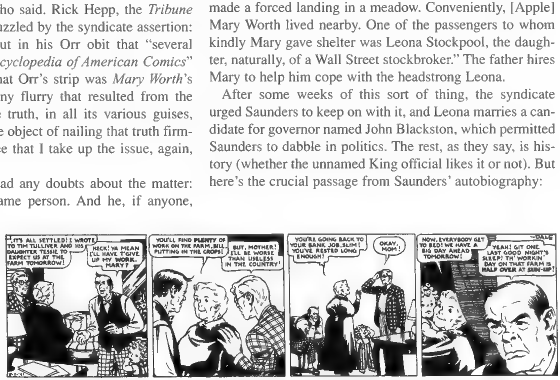
Well, we don't know who said. Rick Hepp, the *Tribune* reporter, was somewhat puzzled by the syndicate assertion: he took pains to point out in his Orr obit that "several sources, including *The Encyclopedia of American Comics*" by Ron Goulart, record that Orr's strip was *Mary Worth*'s precursor. Later, in the tiny flurry that resulted from the King Features' claim, the truth, in all its various guises, emerged. And it is with the object of nailing that truth firmly to the wall for all to see that I take up the issue, again, here.

Allen Saunders never had any doubts about the matter: the two Marys are the same person. And he, if anyone, should know. His autobiography was published serially in *Nemo* magazine several years ago, and in No. 9 of that periodical, Saunders rehearses the details of his inheriting *Apple Mary*.

When the syndicate then Publishers, which distributed *Big Chief Wahoo*) asked Saunders to take on the writing task, he was nonplussed. "I can't even read it," Saunders responded, "let alone write it." But since the *Toledo News-Bee* had recently sunk, taking Saunders' writing berth with it, he had no regular newspaper gig anymore, so he agreed to take on the scripting.

"Laboring over the continuity," he wrote, "I chanced upon a happy idea one day. Instead of treacly melodrama, why not do stories of the sort that were used in popular magazines for women? No current story strip dealt with romance and psychological drama instead of action.... To test the idea of a story with which women readers could better identify, I wrote a sequence in which a passenger plane made a forced landing in a meadow. Conveniently, [Apple] Mary Worth lived nearby. One of the passengers to whom kindly Mary gave shelter was Leona Stockpool, the daughter, naturally, of a Wall Street stockbroker." The father hires Mary to help him cope with the headstrong Leona.

After some weeks of this sort of thing, the syndicate urged Saunders to keep on with it, and Leona marries a candidate for governor named John Blackston, which permitted Saunders to dabble in politics. The rest, as they say, is history (whether the unnamed King official likes it or not). But here's the crucial passage from Saunders' autobiography:


"IT'S ALL SETTLED!! I WROTE TO TIM TULLIVER AND HIS DAUGHTER TESSIE TO EXPECT US AT THE FARM TOMORROW!
HOW'D YA MEAN "US"? YOU'RE NOT GIVIN' UP MY WORK, MARY?
YOU'LL FIND PLENTY OF WORK ON THE FARM, BILL, PUTTING IN THE CROPS!
BUT, MOTHER! I'LL BE WORSE THAN USELESS IN THE COUNTRY!
YOU'RE GOING BACK TO YOUR BANK JOB, SLIM! YOU'VE RESTED LONG ENOUGH!
OKAY, MOM!
NOW, EVERYBODY GET TO BED! WE HAVE A BIG DAY AHEAD TOMORROW!
YEAH! SAY ONE LAST GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP TO MORNIN DAY ON THAT FARM IS HALF OVER AT 8AM-HE-HE!

Kindly Mary acquired a son named Slim just about the time she sent her faithful retainer, Bill, out to pasture at the farm in mid-1941.

MARY WORTH
I···HARDLY EXPECTED TO FIND YOU HERE, CONNIE!
I'M SURE YOU DIDN'T, MARY!
AND YOU HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO SEND ME AWAY!
IT WAS BEASTLY OF ME!··· LEAVING THAT ICY NOTE ··· AND MOVING OUT!
YOU SAID IN YOUR NOTE THAT YOU'D SEND GIUSEPPE TO PICK UP YOUR BELONGINGS, CONNIE!
I KNOW···I'M NOT HERE FOR THAT PURPOSE!
I CAME···TO ASK FOR YOUR FORGIVENESS, MARY!··· AND YOUR HELP!
YES, CONNIE···?
SINCE I'VE BEEN A···A SELF-INVITED GUEST UNDER YOUR ROOF, I'VE BEHAVED ABOMINABLY!···SIMPLY BECAUSE I'M A SELF-CENTERED, SHALLOW, ARROGANT FOOL!
WE ALL HAVE SHORTCOMINGS, CONNIE! I'M SURE MINE HAVE BEEN A TRIAL TO YOU AT TIMES!
IF THERE'S ANYTHING TO FORGIVE, I BELIEVE ME, I···
···I'M IN NO MOOD AT PRESENT TO HOLD A SILLY GRUDGE! IN FACT···FOR REASONS I MYSELF FIND IT HARD TO ADMIT···LIKE AT THE MOMENT IS VERY···
SLAMDOORS!
MARY···I SAID I WAS HERE FOR HELP! ···OF THE SORT YOU HAVE THE KINDNESS AND THE COMMON SENSE TO GIVE···
TELL ME HOW I CAN ···WIN BACK THE HEART OF THE ONLY MAN I'VE EVER FELT I COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT!
3-22-79

By the time the accomplished artist Ken Ernst was well into his stint on the strip, Mary and her ministrations had assumed a very stylish look. This sample is from 1959.

"Soon after our team took over, we changed the name of the strip to *Mary Worth's Family*. Later, it took on its present title, *Mary Worth*. In her new role, the old street merchant [Apple Mary] obviously was not usable. So Ken Ernst gave her a beauty treatment, some weight loss and a more appropriate wardrobe. We put her applecart in storage, where it will remain, even in the event of another economic slump. Our Mary has more timely things to do than peddle pippins."

No one ever expects to get any closer to the horse's mouth than this. Apple Mary is Mary Worth. And when I phoned Jay Kennedy, King's editor-in-chief, he was as dumbfounded by the obit's claim to the contrary as I and all the rest of us dusty-shouldered delvers into comics history had been. Every history he's ever read, he said, has Mary Worth morphing out of Apple Mary. So somebody in the King shop just goofed. It happens. And now that everything is sorted out satisfactorily, all is forgiven.

Still, a few doubters lingered at the fringes of this archival expedition. And then, happily, we got inside the horse's mouth, right there amongst the molars and bicuspids. At the *New York Daily News*, Jay Maeder, writer of *Annie* these days, was rummaging in his personal stash of old comic strip clippings and found some *Apple Marys* from 1935 and sent me copies, which are on display in this vicinity. From these strips, dated February, it is clear beyond quibble that Apple Mary is Mary Worth—and was from the very beginning. These February strips, appearing within four months of the strip's debut, set the conditions of Mary Worth's apple-peddling occupation before us.

Maeder wrote me: "I [always] thought Apple Mary was some standard-issue Depression bag lady who subsequently came into a little money and improved herself. Turns out she was a woman of refinement and breeding the whole time, a once-wealthy individual who had been cheated out of her properties and reduced to apple-selling to keep together body and soul. Apparently, at least early on, her efforts to restore herself to her accustomed station in life provided much of the heart-tugging drama of the thing. You live, you learn."

As have we all.

You may have noticed that the "team" Saunders refers to when they changed the strip's name the first time evidently didn't include Dale Conner. In the history of the feature, it did; but in Saunders recollection, she wasn't there. Probably he knew that she didn't want to be there. Everyone seemed happy with Saunders' transformation of Apple Mary into Mary Worth—with the restoration of the protagonist to her former station in life, that is—except Conner, who was then drawing the strip with a liquid line that sharply defined the milieu and the characters.

Mary rendered in his best stylish manner by Ken Ernst.

She didn't like Saunders' changes to the strip. Writing to Milton Caniff, she said: "I'm so heart-sick over what *Apple Mary* has turned out to be. Working on it has become a chore. There's no action to draw, only dull and childish conversation, and the plot is so inane that I gag as I try to make something of it. I dread seeing the proofs each week for my feeling shows in them."

Conner preferred adventure stories—like Caniff's *Terry and the Pirates*. By 1942 she was married and had endured Saunders' scripts enough: her husband, Herb Ulrey, teamed with her to write a new strip that she drew, *Hugh Striver*, a epic about a high school athlete. It lasted until February 1945 whereupon the team concocted an airplane strip, *Ayer Lane*, which lasted only a little longer than their other effort.

Meanwhile, back for another Saunders' *Worth*, we can report that the strip is still lunging along. It is so often published adjacent to *Judge Parker* and *Rex Morgan* on the funnies page that I am tempted to think the three come as a matched set. I half expect to open the paper someday and find Mary leaning over the windowsill panel border of her strip to give Rex or the Judge down below the benefit of her advice.

Mary, by the way, never married during the run of the strip. She came close once, though. In 1949 she meets a charming old coot named Drum Greenwood, who has piled up a fortune with his successful bubble-gum business. When he promises to endow in her name a slum clearance project, she agrees to the nuptials. But on her way to the church, the taxi gets in an accident, and Mary suffers amnesia. She is still, apparently, under its influence because she has never married old Greenwood.

Her grandson Denny, on the other hand, advanced in life. He lost his crutches along the way and earned himself a respected slot in a Neiman-Marcus sort of establishment, where he eventually married the fashion designer named September Smith. Lovely name.

Oh—when I said *Mary Worth* wasn't, actually, the first soap opera, I was thinking of an earlier strip that oozed heartthrob and psychic agony: Sidney Smith's *The Gumps*, which began its sudsy strain in the early 1920s. The strip started February 12, 1917, but it didn't get genuinely soapy until four years later when Andy Gump's rich Uncle Bim almost falls into the matrimonial clutches of the avaricious Widow Zander. But that's another story for another day.

Next time, if Alex doesn't flash by his brother in a dither, leaving the latter ripped at the curb under the jungle gym, we'll consider the magic of outer space and why one of Alex Raymond's initial trio of strips was so much better than the other two.

Inspiration Central

Murphy Anderson – Part Three of Three

by Bill Baker

Editor's Note: Concluding our slightly different twist on Inspiration Central, we take one more look (but by no means a final look) at the inspiration and influence of Murphy Anderson and his fellow creators and others around the industry.

MIKE RICHARDSON
Publisher, Dark Horse Comics

Murphy Anderson is one of the true comic book legends. Some of my earliest (and fondest) memories of comics include those created by Murphy. His run in *Mystery In Space* featuring Adam Strange remains with me to this day. I had the pleasure of working with Murphy and his company during the early years of Dark Horse and was pleased to find the man to be just as impressive as his work.

JIM VALENTINO
Publisher, Image Comics

Like most children of the Silver Age I had admired Murphy Anderson since I was a kid. I loved his beautiful brush strokes over perfectly rendered forms, his use of camera angle and gesture to bring uncanny grace to his figures. But what thrilled me the most upon meeting and working with him was the man himself—his quick smile, his gentle manner, that friendly, rich baritone voice. What a joy to meet one of your childhood heroes who not only lives up to your expectations, but exceeds them.

I am proud to call Murphy and Helen Anderson my friends. They are two of the dearest people I know. And, I *still* love his art!

BTW, If you don't know, I worked with Murphy, on *normalman*, *1963*, the Silver-Age *ShadowHawk*, and *U.S. Male* among others I'm probably forgetting.

STEVE RUDE
Artist, co-creator of *Nexus*

I first met Murphy Anderson at a Detroit convention in the mid 1990s. It was one of those rare moments where an artist actually looked like you expected him to—tall and handsome with a booming baritone voice. And lest I forget the most important quality of all—a true gentlemen.

RICH KOSLOWSKI
Archie artist & creator of *The Three Geeks*

As a child growing up reading comics I didn't pay much attention to who was doing them, I just knew they were good...I now realize it was guys like Murphy who made them so darn good.

JEFF PARKER
Artist on *Solitaire*, future issues of *Robin*

It's always a treat to hear Murphy's resonant bass voice speaking on art and illustration, as he is one of comic's more educated professionals. While living in Chapel Hill, I didn't know there was a Dean Cornwell mural in the old post office until Murphy told me about it. He lived there a while, having gone to UNC to study under Cornwell. The comics medium was lucky to have Anderson lend it his talent.

SHELTON DRUM
Heroes Aren't Hard To Find/Heroes Convention

I'll admit, I was and still am a Marvel Zombie, a True Believer if you will. I discovered Marvel comics first, and stuck with them. But all along, I noticed and sometimes would buy those beautiful DCs with the dynamic covers. One of the big differences between the Marvels and DCs was the fact that the '60s DCs did not have art and story credits like the Marvels. A few years later, as I got deeper into fandom I discovered those DCs I bought just for the covers were by Gil Kane, Carmine Infantino, Nick Cardy and Murphy Anderson.

As I got even deeper into fandom and started promoting comic conventions and opened retail stores, I got my chance to meet all of the incredible artists and writers I had admired for years. In the early '80s I was spending an absolutely wonderful weekend in Greensboro, NC with Gil Kane. He was my special guest at a "mini-con" in the local mall. On that Sunday afternoon, a very distinguished gentleman came up and introduced himself. It was Murphy Anderson; he was in town visiting relatives and had seen my advertisements for the show.

What a delight! Gil Kane and Murphy Anderson in the same weekend! I of course made sure to invite Murphy back for future shows, and my wife Cynthia and I have become huge fans of both Murphy and his lovely wife Helen. They are two of the nicest people you will ever meet. Murphy and I have come full circle, he was again our guest this past summer at the Heroes Convention here in Charlotte. I had established the theme of the show as a celebration of the Avengers, and, looking for a dynamic piece for the convention program, I commissioned Murphy to do a "What If Murphy Anderson had done the cover of *Avengers* #1?" Apparently, I'm still a zombie after all!

JENNIFER M. CONTINO

Interviews Editor, Sequential Tart

Murphy Anderson was the first Silver Age creator that I had the pleasure of meeting. I was 18 years old and it fascinated him that I knew so much about Silver Age comics. He *truly* is a gentleman, just like everyone says. He spoke respectfully and kindly to this overzealous fan-girl. I'll never forget him, because I saw him at the end of the con—hours later—and he still remembered not only my name but my dad's as well. That was coolness!

"CRAZY ED" SAVITT

Dealer

I was ten when first enamored with Murphy Anderson, by the two-page poster bonus in *Batman* #181—then he revived The Spectre (*Showcase* #60). With *Spectre* #1, this 11-year-old DC fan was forever hooked. Long live fans of the beloved Silver Age!

MARK WHEATLEY

Artist, writer, co-creator of *Breathtaker*, creator of *The Body*, *Frankenstein Mobster*

In 1970 I was 16 years old and I had the good fortune to attend a comic convention for the first time. This was the New York Comic Art convention. As part of the journey my parents arranged for a tour of the DC Comics offices. I'll skip all the cool stuff that happened except for how the tour ended.

Anderson inks (over Infantino pencils), Gardner Fox script: Adam Strange, jetpack, raygun, monstrous menace, Alanna to save—in short, everything!

We were ushered into the DC production room. A number of artists (all wearing ties!) were working on pages of comic art. One of the artists was Murphy Anderson—a favorite of mine for his work on Adam Strange and the Atomic Knights. I watched over his shoulder as he inked a page. Every stroke of his pen was etched into my mind as I attempted to absorb his expertise just by being so close! His lines were so perfect and clean. Already I was starting to understand...I shouldn't be inking with a 15-cent model painting brush, the kind that never come to a point. Then Murphy did something that absolutely staggered my imagination. He took out a second brush and dipped it into WHITE PAINT!!!!! Then he proceeded to fix several "mistakes" on his page. WHITE PAINT!!!! Can you believe it? It was possible to correct ink lines! You didn't have to live with the mistakes! In my amazement I said, "What is that?" Murphy held up the bottle of paint and explained, "This? This is white paint." And I responded bluntly, "Wow! I bet you sure use a lot of that!"

Of course my parents all immediately started apologizing for the insult. But I still wasn't even registering that I'd said something that could be construed as an insult. I was still attempting to grasp the implications of WHITE PAINT!!!! And Murphy understood. He smiled and said, "Actually, yeah, I do use a lot of this. It comes in handy." Of course—I bet anything that I've used far more white paint since then than he ever did.

Don't let the inspiration end here! E-mail ***cbm@gemstonepub.com*** *and send us your thoughts about Murphy Anderson's impact on the world of comics!*

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

by J.C. Vaughn, Executive Editor

Wow! What a great time to be reading comics! The Enemy Ace *Archives is on the way, Spider-Man is swinging across the silver screen, Crime Syndicate Action Figures are coming all the way from Earth-3, and Captain America looks to be in the hands of folks who are serious about it. Here' s a look at some recent publications you shouldn't miss out on!*

ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN—VOLUME ONE
Marvel Comics, Hardcover, $34.95
Brian Michael Bendis, Bill Jemas-writers
Mark Bagley-pencils
Art Thibert-inks

Been afraid to check out *Ultimate Spider-Man* because "it's not the real Spidey" or something along those lines? You wouldn't be the first. If you've hesitated to read Marvel's highly successful web-slinger revamp for whatever reason, but you've been secretly looking for an excuse to do so, here is your golden opportunity.

The format of the new Marvel hardcover line is easily one of the best things to happen to comics fans in years. With slightly over-sized art, great paper, excellent reproduction and a presence that actually seems to demand notice, the *Ultimate Spider-Man—Volume I* hardcover is a thing of beauty.

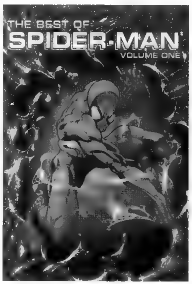
Collected in this edition are the stories from *Ultimate Spider-Man* #1-13, background material on the creation of Marvel's Ultimate line, Bill Jemas's original story for the Spidey launch, correspondence between Jemas and writer Brian Michael Bendis, character development sketches, and the story that started it all, the Stan Lee and Steve Ditko masterpiece from *Amazing Fantasy* #15.

From the start, there's been nothing inherent in the Ultimate line to alienate longtime Spidey fans. There was a lot of talk about making things contemporary for today's young potential readers, but we're not talking about reinventing the wheel here. Bendis (with and without Jemas) never strays far from the spirit of the early issues of *Amazing Spider-Man*. In fact, *Ultimate* is significantly closer to the essence of the original than most of the issues of *Amazing* in the last decade or so. Bendis frees himself from the shackles of 40 years of continuity, not all of it the highlights many of us so fondly remember.

That it takes an entire story arc to re-tell a tale Stan Lee told us in less than the length of a full comic is not a failing of the new interpretation but a suggestion of just how rich a web Stan spun when he and Steve Ditko went to work all those years ago.

If you like Marvel's line of Masterworks, you're going to love the style and substance of this new book. This hardcover is a stunning celebration of Spider-Man, and if you're a Spidey fan it's a "must have" if ever there was one.

THE BEST OF SPIDER-MAN 2001
Marvel Comics, Hardcover, $34.95
J. Michael Straczynski, Brian Michael Bendis and others-writers
John Romita, Jr., Bill Sienkiewicz and others-pencils
Scott Hanna and others-inks



When it was announced that *Babylon 5* creator J. Michael Straczynski had signed to write *Amazing Spider-Man* beginning with #30, I didn't know what to think. I was a big fan of his TV series and had enjoyed both *Rising Stars* and *Midnight Nation*, his two comics at Image under the Joe's Comics imprint, but *Amazing Spider-Man* was a severely burdened title.

In fact, I've often reflected that I might not have been as willing to accept the *Ultimate Spider-Man* series if the regular Spidey titles hadn't been so lousy for the last decade or so. *Amazing*, I thought, would take someone's full-time attention to fix.

Wrong.

Instead, while he's been writing and producing Showtime's new science fiction TV program *Jeremiah*, Straczynski's been doing a bang-up job of reaching into Peter Parker's character and bringing out the best.

His opening story arc (*Amazing Spider-Man* #30-35) demands the best from artist John Romita, Jr. and succeeds in getting it. That story, which is reprinted in this volume along with his World Trade Center reaction issue (*Amazing Spider-Man* #36), throws Spidey against a new villain, a new situation, and a new direction in his life. The action is superb, the art is wonderful, and the story is pure Spider-Man. I knew at the end of the first issue I would be reading this title regularly, and that hasn't happened since the late '80s for me. If you didn't care for the last ten years or so of *Amazing*, this is one superb re-introduction.

Also included in this "Best of" collection is the Brian Bendis/Bill Sienkiewicz Spider-Man/Daredevil/Punisher three-issue story from *Ultimate Marvel Team-Up*, and several solid stories from other Spidey stories. It's a great package (like the *Ultimate Spider-Man* HC it's slightly oversized and a superior production job).

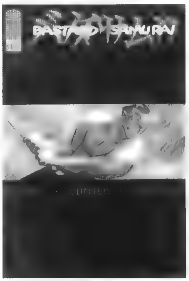
Combined with the experience of reading these stories, the *Ultimate* stories, and talking with readers, collectors and dealers across the country, there was an important truth to be found: Marvel fans want to love Spider-Man; it took a lot for them to chase us away over the years. Now they want us back, they're doing a lot to reach us, and collectively we seem to be reacting. As I write this, we're just two weeks away from the debut of the movie. It's a great time to be a Spider-Man fan.

CAPTAIN AMERICA Vol. 4 #1
Marvel Comics, regular format, $3.99
John Ney Reibe-writer
John Cassada-artist

Having seen the depth and energy of John Cassaday's work on *Planetary*, *Union Jack* and *Desperadoes*, I was prepared to like this book, at least visually, the day it was announced. It didn't disappoint. Not having been a huge fan of writer John Ney Reiber (*Books of Magic*), I didn' t know what to expect, so I went in with a more or less open mind.

Set in the immediate aftermath of the World Trade Center attack, this issue really just sets the stage for what is to come. It doesn't tell us a lot, but it does clearly suggest that Reiber and Cassaday know where they're going with this title and that it's going to be a fun ride. Check it out. Even if you don't like the story (you will), the art alone is worth the price of admission.

BASTARD SAMURAI #1
Image Comics, regular format, $2.95
Michael Avon Oeming-creator, co-writer, inks
Miles Gunter-co-creator, writer
Kelsey Shannon-co-creator, pencils, colors



This is the second mini-series created by artist Michael Avon Oeming capitalizing on his success as co-creator of *Powers*. It starts a little rougher than the first (*Hammer of the Gods*) in terms of its storytelling, but this is a highly compelling, visually dynamic tale of a modern-day samurai trained by a secret group and released, as a test, into society at large. It's Blade Runner meets John Woo with some serious soul searching, introspection, violence, sex and Akira Kurosawa films.

There's a bit that's harder to follow for those of us not steeped in samurai cinema, and that's the dragon dreaming sequence when Jiro's inner self warns him of a coming event. It' s still entertaining, and I'll definitely be picking up future issues, but this seems like a story element that will work better in a collected edition than in the serialized, regular comic format.

Collectable Character Statues

by Mike Wilbur

Let's all pause in the festivities for a moment to address the Big Question. The Riddle of the Ages. That missing piece of knowledge that has perplexed scholars since the Dawn of Enlightenment. What is this elusive bit of information that inquiring minds want to know?

The most common question I get from statue-collecting novices is also one of the most loaded questions in any area of collecting interest, and one of the trickiest to answer. **"What should I collect?"**

What makes it tricky is the almost unavoidable subjectiveness of the answer with regards to the motivations of the person answering.

This question gives me flashbacks to an earlier point in my long and convoluted comics-related career; back to a time when I was still paying my dues slogging around the country in the employ of a major (now-defunct) Golden- and Silver-Age comics dealer.

During the speculator boom of the early-'90s, it was a common comic show/convention occurrence for a comics virgin, whose interest was piqued by the media hype, to wander in and ask dealers "What should I collect?" Of course, the opportunistic dealers would get that greedy glint in their eyes and steer the unfortunate victim to the over-priced, over-hyped flavor-of-the-week book, melodramatically extolling its virtues over all the other "must-have" books in the room.

Or, the dealer having a really slow sales day would often recommend to the unwary that crusty piece of deadwood gathering dust on his wall display since the day he acquired it eighteen months earlier after losing a coin toss on a trade deal.

I, on the other hand, would be greeted with a puzzled expression when I answered the same question with the non-self-serving response "Ignore the hype; collect what you like." To clarify, I would explain that the hot/hyped books were a volatile market. If the prospective buyer's interest was "investment," these only paid off with a quick turnover. If they wanted something to appreciate over the long haul, older books featuring well-known, established characters were the key. But the bottom line was always that they should actually like what they were collecting. That way, if the bottom fell out, at least they would have some reading material they could enjoy.

(clockwise from top left) **10th Anniversary Edition** of Joseph Linsner's **Dawn**, from Fewture Models. Robert E. Howard's **Conan the Barbarian** from Hard Heroes Enterprises. **Lara Croft, Tomb Raider** videogame superstar from Varner Studios. Burne Hogarth's **Tarzan** from Graphitti Designs. Hogarth personally designed, supervised the sculpting, and approved the prototype of this piece. Unfortunately, he died before the finished statue was manufactured and available for sale.

The same philosophy holds true with statue collecting. If you don't like it, if it's not something you would enjoy seeing on display in your home or office day-after-day, year-after-year, DON'T BUY IT! Never mind if it's hyped as "the next big thing" or "sure to triple in value by next Tuesday." If you don't like it, don't buy it! Simple as that! If it interests or excites you, if you think you'll enjoy (and not get bored with) having it in front of you on a daily basis, go for it! Once this basic rule is established, we can get down to specifics.

There are several directions from which to approach statue collecting.

Some people are character oriented. They will select one or more favorite characters, and simply collect any items they find featuring those characters. This can be a very short course of action, given the total number of pieces actually available in the statue market, and the sparse (even non-existent) coverage given to some characters. Outside of **Spider-Man**, **Superman**, and **Batman** pickings will be mighty slim. You could widen your scope by including characters from your favorite's "family." For example, if you want to collect Spider-Man, you could also look for the mini-busts of his foes, such as the **Green Goblin**, **The Rhino**, **Doctor Octopus**, **The Lizard**, **The Sandman**, **Kraven the Hunter**, etc. If you're a Superman fan, there are also statues of Supergirl, other-dimensional nemesis **Mr. Mzyxptlk** and **Krypto the Super-Dog**, as well as a scene depicting Superman's Kryptonian parents **Lara** and **Jor-El** preparing to launch the rocket containing their infant son into space. Batman collectors can also choose from statues of **Robin**, **Nightwing**, **Batgirl**, **Catwoman**, **The Joker**, other-dimensional pain-in-the-ass **Bat-Mite** and two versions of **Frank Miller**'s alternate-future **Dark Knight**, among others.

(clockwise from top left) **45th Anniversary Playboy Bunny** produced in 1998 by Modern Icons. Tex Avery's legendary **Droopy** from French studio Demons et Merveilles. **Green Arrow** from DC Direct. **10th Anniversary Edition** of Erik Larsen's **Savage Dragon** from Moore Creations.

Another approach would be to collect pieces produced by a particular sculptor or studio. This broadens the scope of available items greatly. If you set the goal of acquiring everything released by, for example, **DC Direct**, *Bowen Designs* or *Moore Creations*, you can look forward to an interesting quest of much longer duration and wide variety. Nothing like the thrill of the hunt to liven up the collecting experience.

Then, of course there's the most simple and basic approach (and back to my theme for this column): Collect what you like.

I have pieces in my personal collection featuring characters whose comics I've never read, or whose movies/tv shows I've never seen (and, out of respect for, and deference to, the characters' creators, I'm not naming any names!). I've never had any interest in following their adventures (for a variety of reasons), but their statues were too cool not to buy! They look good, and I enjoy seeing and displaying them. (And, incidentally, the pictures accompanying this column are merely a representational cross-section of what's available and no deeper meaning should be interpreted.)

The bottom line is, there's no "right way" or "wrong way" to collect statues. The only "rule" is that you enjoy yourself, and your acquisitions, in the process. And, if you happen to be able to resell your treasures for a profit years later when you DO get tired of looking at them on a daily basis, you've got a bonus added to the years of visual enjoyment they provided you.

A Matter of Scale

Another question that perplexes some collectors is the variance in scale of the wide range of statues

[cont. on page 79]

Comics2Film Digest

by Rob Worley

Here' s the latest on the comic book movies that are actually in production:

Progress continues on Marvel' s *Daredevil* movie. A few noteworthy cameos were filmed in April. Filmmaker and *Daredevil* comics writer Kevin Smith shot a scene early in the month. Smith plays a morgue attendant named Jack Kirby! Also on the set was Stan Lee who may have filmed the most significant scene in his career as a bit-player. Lee reportedly plays the elderly man who young Matt Murdock saves, and in the process is blinded and acquires his radar senses. Also on the set was Marvel Editor-in-Chief Joe Quesada. As of this writing it has not been announced as to whether or not Quesada makes an appearance in the movie. Other new cast members include Kane Hodder (*Jason X*), Leland Orser, Paul Ben-Victor (*Three Stooges*), Ellen Pompeo and Coolio.

Cameras began rolling on *The Hulk* for Universal. The film is shooting in San Francisco and other locations in California. In late April the production wrapped on a series of shoots near the Berkeley National Laboratory's dome-shaped Advanced Light Source lab building. Former TV Hulk Lou Ferrigno filmed a cameo there, playing a security guard.

At an April press conference director Ang Lee said that he was grateful for having "a great studio supporting my dream."

He also talked about how star Eric Bana will transform into the green goliath. "The transformation we're still figuring out [but it will be] something we haven't seen before." Bana confirmed there will be "a lot" of him in the creature.

X-Men 2 may be in production by the time this column sees print. Marvel and Fox are moving the film along for a June production start. The film is set to film on location in Vancouver, a departure from the previous movie, which lensed in Toronto.

(above) Marvel Comics' New York-based Editor-in-Chief Joe Quesada (left)—who earned industry accolades for his work as artist on **Daredevil** from 1998-2000—visits with director Mark Steven Johnson (center) and executive producer, Marvel Studios' Kevin Feige (right) on the Burbank, California set of the Twentieth Century Fox/Regency Enterprises feature film **Daredevil** on April 30, 2002.

(right) Marvel Comics legend Stan Lee (far right) and co-creator of Daredevil, meets the filmmakers on the set of **Daredevil** in Burbank, CA. From left, executive producer Kevin Feige, producer Avi Arad, producer Gary Foster, director of photography Ericson Core (rear), director Mark Steven Johnson and Stan Lee. Photo Credit: Zade Rosenthal.

Screenwriters Dan Harris and Michael Dougherty are working on the latest draft of the script.

The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen is also due for a June start in Prague.

(right) Joe Pantoliano (as Ben Urich) and Kevin Smith (as Jack Kirby) on the set of Daredevil.

(below) Ben Affleck as Matt Murdock and Jon Favreau as Foggy Nelson.

SUB-MARINER

Screenwriter David Self is set to dive into the undersea kingdom of Sub-Mariner. Self has signed a seven-figure deal to write and executive produce a movie based on Marvel's aquatic king for Universal Pictures. Sub-Mariner marks Self's second major comic book adaptation. He also penned the script for *Road to Perdition*, which is due out later this year.

Marvel Studios president Avi Arad is producing with Kevin Misher's studio-based Misher Films.

HELLBOY

The *Hellboy* movie is officially a "go" project. In late April director Guillermo del Toro (*Blade 2*) got the green light to make the $60 million movie for Revolution Studios. Ron Perlman (*Blade 2*), a favorite actor of Del Toro and Hellboy creator Mike Mignola, is set to star in the movie. Del Toro told "C2F" that he wants Mignola to be very involved in the movie. "I know this movie is important for the fans so I am keeping Mike Mignola involved ALL THROUGH the process," Del Toro told us.

He went on to say that Hellboy's creator will likely have a co-producer or executive producer credit, "thus having him involved in the decision making for the movie in pre-production, production and post-production." Del Toro also said that it's not just his and Mignola's opinions that are important. He wants to hear from Hellboy fans too. He's accepting e-mails from fans who want to ask questions or express support at the address hellboy@comics2film.com.

SPIDER-MAN 2

Tobey Maguire, Kirsten Dunst and director Sam Raimi are officially signed on to do a sequel to *Spider-Man*. Sony is keen to get the ball rolling and hopes to start filming early next year. James Franco (Harry Osborn) and J.K. Simmons (J. Jonah Jameson) are also likely to return.

Alfred Gough and Miles Millar, the team who wrote *Shanghai Noon* and created and executive produced *Smallville* are on board to write the screenplay.

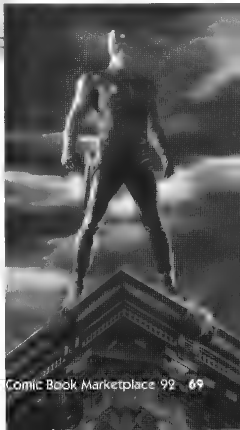
Maguire will collect eight figures and gross participation for *Spider-Man 2*.

JUDGE DREDD MOVIES

Jason Kingsley, CEO of Rebellion told "C2F" that work is underway on new drafts of the screenplays for the planned Judge Dredd movies. The chief said that the new storylines are "very different from what announced last October."

Rebellion has teamed with Shoreline Entertainment to film the two projects back-to-back. The movies will bear no relation to the previous Sylvester Stallone feature.

The original working titles were *Judge Dredd: Dredd Reckoning* and *Judge Dredd: Possession*. Kingsley did not say if the titles were intact.



(right) Ben Affleck in costume on the set of Daredevil.

Universal's official teaser logo for **The Hulk**.

THE PUNISHER

Artisan Entertainment has hired Jonathan Hensleigh to write and make his directorial bow on Marvel's *The Punisher*. Hensleigh's writing credits include *Jumanji*, *Die Hard: With a Vengeance* and *The Saint*. He's also been an executive producer on *Gone in Sixty Seconds*, *Armageddon* and *Con Air*.

This is not the first time Hensleigh has been tapped to write and direct a Marvel property. He had written a draft of *The Hulk* and was attached to direct that one. That development effort ran to a halt in 1998, and of course was more recently revived with different players.

Hulk producer Gale Anne Hurd will produce *The Punisher* as well.

G-MEN FROM HELL

The movie has been in the can for over a year, but it's looking like June will probably bring Mike Allred's *G-Men From Hell* out on DVD. The movie stars William Forsythe and Tate Donovan as the titular G-Men and is directed by Christopher Coppola. The characters spun out of Allred's early indy comic *Grafix Muzik*, the same comic from which Madman originates.

Allred said that he recently recorded a commentary track for the DVD. He has also said that his independent movie *Astroesque* will be included on the disc. That movie loosely ties in to his *Red Rocket 7* comic.

The movie will be released by Framework Entertainment.

All from G-Men From Hell

SOME TROUBLE OF A SERRIOUS NATURE

CBM executive editor J.C. Vaughn is ready for his close-up. Comic creator turned filmmaker Billy Tucci (*Shi*) told "Comics2Film" that Vaughn would be filming a part in his independent movie *Some Trouble of a SeRRious Nature* early in May. Vaughn plays an aircraft manufacturing rep who puzzles over a complaint letter that tells the comedic story of the film.

SHORT TAKES

Universal Picture's has optioned Mike Kunkel's *Herobear & The Kid* for development as an animated feature. The project will be developed by Chuck Gordon's Daybreak Prods. and Adrian Askarieh's Prime Universe Prods.

It looks likely that director Frank Oz will direct the movie version of Brian Michael Bendis and Michael Avon Oeming's hit comic *Powers*. Oz's recent credits include *The Score* and *Bowfinger*.

Marvel Studios chief Avi Arad said that the *Iron Fist* movie is still in the works. However, director Kirk Wong has dropped out of the picture. Ray Park is still attached for the lead role.

Blade director Stephen Norrington is looking to create a westernized version of the hit anime Akira for American audiences. Jon Peters (*Batman*) will produce.

Oscar nominee Becky Johnston (*The Prince of Tides*) is the latest screenwriter to take a pass at the *Wonder Woman* script. Sandra Bullock, who has long been attached as the lead, appears to have given up on the project.

A direct-to-video sequel to the Dark Horse/Universal movie *TimeCop* is currently in development. However, sources at Dark Horse say they don't know anything about it and are none-too-pleased to see the studio moving on such a project without consulting them.

Rumor has it Fox is planning a special edition DVD release of *X-Men*.

Stan Lee has founded yet another new media company. POW! Entertainment already has an animated show in development for TNN. Called *Stripperella* the toon features the voice and motion capture talents of Pamela Anderson, who plays a stripper-turned-superhero.

Comic creator turned animator Kevin VanHook has sold his visual effects company, VanHook studios to Film Roman, Inc.

The Michael Naiman Report
Auctions, etc.

The convention and auction season is now fully upon us, and it looks as if this might be one of the biggest years ever for sales of high priced books. With auctions by Heritage, The Mint, MastroNet and All-Star Auctions looming, there will be an enormous selection of art, toys and slabbed goods for those willing to pay top prices. Don't for a minute think that there'll be any bargains out there.

With sellers abdicating all grading responsibilities to a third-party grader, all they have to do is consign their goods to an auction house and wash their hands of the product. No returns on slabbed goods. Who can examine them? What if you disagree with the grade? Tough luck. You bought it, you own t—live with it!

There will be an opportunity to purchase some truly unique tems in the months to come. Who would have ever thought that you'd see the complete original art to Ditko's Spider-Man #10 for sale? Or for that matter the original art to Tales to Astonish #27? Also available will be the Romita original cover art to Amazing Spider-Man #69, the fully painted cover art to Spectacular Spider-Man #2, an Alex Schomburg specialty piece of Captain America and Stan Lee's personal file copies of the key Marvel titles. Truly mind boggling!

For the high-grade collector of those hard to locate square bound books, All-Star Auctions will feature a selection of books from the Bill Howard Collection. These ultra high-grade beauties include a selection of Silver Surfers, Tower issues, Harvey Giants, Dells, DC Romance and the self covered Gold Key annuals. Many collectors realize how tough it is to find high-grade square bounds. Traditionally, these books have suffered from being crammed into wire racks, suffered from excess gluing and off-centered spine titles, and staples that have migrated through the front and back covers. All those attending the San Diego show will be able to gander at these goodies! I've seen this huge collection and it is just the tip of the iceberg!

It appears as if there will be plenty to choose from if you have the bucks. The hobby has begun to polarize in recent years due to the increased dollars paid for big books. There are those few who buy the big books and everyone else who spends much less. But, are they really being "paid for." There is a small group of New York/New Jersey investor/collectors who trade these big books amongst themselves. The inflated prices "paid" for these might only really reflect their trade value. If you have very little originally invested (or you bought them "right" years ago) who cares if both ends of the trade want to inflate their sales price? It is just funny money anyway. The problem might occur when the last person holding the inflated book might need to liquidate in a timely manner. Will they be able to realize their full price? Probably not.

Those collectors who are not bucks-up are finding that they can obtain their particular lower grade books for 60-70% of Guide. No need to pay any more than that amount…there's just a ton of product out there. When it comes to restored, non-key books…paying more than 15% of Guide is being generous. And you can forget about restored Silver Age books; not much of a market for those.

The auction block will certainly be hopping this year. With Sotheby's and Christie's out of the limelight, the vacuum has been filled by the new guys.

According to the Associated Press, almost five months after a U.S. District Court jury in New York found him guilty of price fixing, University of Michigan alumnus and philanthropist A. Alfred Taubman received his sentencing from U.S. District Court Judge George Daniels. The 78-year-old former chair of Sotheby's artwork auction house in New York and the namesake of the University of Michigan's College of Architecture and Urban Planning must spend a year in prison and pay a $7.5 million fine for his crimes.

A jury convicted Taubman for conspiring to inflate prices and commissions with rival auction house Christie's International. Together, Christie's and Sotheby's control 90 percent of the world's art auctions.

Prosecutors believe the scheme made Taubman and Christie's Chairman Anthony Tennant $400 million in commissions over six years. Tennant cannot be convicted unless he voluntarily travels from his home in Andover, England to the United States to face charges

What's one of my reports without some Duck News? A recent sale on eBay (#1095755311) of over 1900+ Uncle Scrooge books for $1,913 (that's about $1.59 each) netted the lucky bidder four copies of Scrooge #179. The description of the goods was at best vague so one could not really discern that those 179s were there unless you looked at the pictures. Will the marketplace be able to absorb these? A recent slabbed #179 (CGC 9.0 and the CGC code of 0014080002) had no bidders at an opening amount of $700.We'll soon find out where the market is going on this one! Also, a Don Rosa splash page sold for over $2000, a record for one of his lettered story pages.

The "You Never Know" File: A bunch of the Fantagraphics Prince Valiant oversized reprint books (#1-7) were sitting in my local retailers bins for over a year. They each had a $15 price tag on them. I volunteered to place them on eBay to see what would happen. Heck, reserve them at $55 and it's found money. Right? Seven days and $560 later, everyone is quite pleased! And yet the next week, someone placed issues #1-10 up for grabs and they brought $200. Start looking under your bed for those lost causes. You just never know!

MARKET REPORTS

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I use Overstreet methods for **determining grades** of items that I sell. Quality of paper is very important to me when developing an overall grade on an item. A book with brown to brittle pages cannot attain a high grade. For me to define a comic book, pulp, BLB as VF or better means that the paper is white to a minimum of "off white" in paper quality. Browning is noted wherever possible.

Likewise, comic books with Marvel chipping are also severely downgraded as they have "pieces" missing from the cover. I have recently seen evidence of a third party grading service which does not discount on Marvels for their oft "normal" (?) chipping which does not affect DCs in the same way, as the latter used a higher grade of cover stock. This bothers me as they actually "qualify" certain grades without stating specifically that is what they are up to. My philosophy is the entire comic book needs to be viewed as a whole. That entails examining the interior as well as the exterior. Anything else is an oxymoronic concept.

I am not against third party grading companies, but I am slowly becoming outraged at the current fad trends of after-fact price manipulations which will only serve in the long term to undermine our hobby.

Just because someone has encapsulated a high grade book does not mean it miraculously is now "worth" upwards of 50 times Guide percentages as attested to as "fact" fueled in part by a certain editor at a trade journal who compiles data based on a few hundred sales a month. This has serious long term detriments to the health of the hobby. One only has to look at concepts like the dot.com rise and fall, Enron, or go back to the Tulip Mania craze in Holland in the 1600s to understand where this game of musical chairs will end up!

I have never been one to remain on the sidelines in this field. I have been involved for over 35 years and wish to see our hobby survive! What do you think?

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Hello everyone! As comic fans across the galaxy gear up for yet another summer season of spending, and dealers stock their inventory in **anticipation of the rush**, everyone is waiting with bated breath for the blockbuster Spider-Man movie—and what we all hope will be the merchandising and comic sales flood that follows. I can't remember this much anticipation since Batman came out way back in 1989 (remember THAT one?). Movies are the link to a broader base of readers, and will continue to provide us with an ever-increasing flow of future collectors, as long as the quality of production stays high—a tall order?

Despite the recession, comics seem to be doing fine, or even better than ever, depending on whose opinion you get. No doubt the hobby is still in a growth period after the introduction of eBay and the Internet, CGC, and the continued proliferation of super-hero (and other genre)-based movies and television shows. High grade Silver Age, particularly Marvel, and very particularly Spider-Man, remain at the top of the heap, with high grade anything else close behind. Heck, everything is selling right now, as long as the price is fair.

Thanks to eBay's "wholesale" mentality, we're seeing **price adjustments** across the board for books that many have long considered over-inflated in price, which is a healthy course of action for the market. Comics will no doubt be strengthened by this new, expanded market that continues to grow and mature.

This summer will also see some heated action among the new breed of auction houses, namely MastroNet, The Mint and Heritage. Keep an eye on the material they offer, and what it brings, as I'm sure some sales will shake up the hobby.

Recent Sales: Suspense #2 GD $275, Crack #26 VG/FN $125, Famous Funnies #27 FN- $150, Four Color #16 app VG (light work) $900, #386 VG $150, Feature Book #1 GD/VG $100; #8 VG $120; Action #63 app VF- 7.5 (slight) Cosmic Aeroplane $275, DC Special #6 NM 9.4 $100.

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Welcome to humid Central Florida. Yes, even though it is the springtime, summer has arrived! The month of April was slow. Back issues had a quiet month. We purchased a couple collections this month. Now if only the comics would sell as quickly as I purchase them!

Since I deal with many Dell and Gold Key comics I believe it is time to discuss an issue that has festered for a long time. With very few exceptions, **photo-cover Dell and Gold Key** do not sell anywhere near full Overstreet Guide price. One half of Guide is sometimes not attainable. I base my findings on retail store sales, conventions sales, mail order and Internet auction results. When was the last time you had a collector salivating to purchase a Ricky Nelson, John Wayne or Annette photo cover for $250? When was the last time you got full Guide for a Man From U.N.C.L.E. photo cover from Gold Key? It happens so seldom that the Overstreet Guide should reflect the reality of the situation and lower the price on these books right across the board. Just because one nut spent foolishly on a single file copy does not mean that book should be set at a high price level forever. Lets get the Guide back in line on Dells and Gold Keys!

Silver Age (1956-1969): We recently purchased groups of Marvel, Dell and Atlas. Sales were slow last month. There was demand for a few key books but most titles sat. DC Batman was one exception—we sold a couple dozen this month!

Recent Sales: Star Trek #2 FN $50, Amazing Spider-Man #14 VG $300, Superman Annual #1 FN $150, Batman #100 VG $300.

Golden Age (1935-1955): We purchased a group of late 1940s Westerns. We also purchased a large pre-1950 Archie group of comics. Now I have to get these issues prepared for sale and find homes for most of these books. Demand continues for origin and first-appearance issues. Unrestored high-grade copies of these books very rarely come in. The Overstreet Guide really needs to address the issue of restored Golden Age soon.

Recent Sales: Superman #8 VG $350, Four Color #147 VF $250; Human Torch #9 GD $190, Archie #9 FR $25, Batman #38 VF $350.

Toys, Original Art and Disneyana: We purchased Dell comic book art this month featuring Disney characters. Demand continues for silver age Marvel & DC art. Not much comes in. We also bought a nice run of 1950s Elvis 45 rpm EPs—what great photo sleeves!

Recent Sales: recent Mickey Mouse animation drawing $50, Roy Krenkel pencil sketch $300, Superman Aurora built up, no box $50; 1941 Bambi story book $50.

That will wrap up our month. When visiting the Walt Disney World area please stop by and say hello.

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The **new Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide** will be out any day as I write this, and urge everyone with an interest in comics published before1933 to buy a copy! Doug Wheeler, Bob Beerbohm, and I have divided the Platinum Section of the Guide into two parts. Victorian books, from around 1828 to 1898, and Platinum books, from around 1898 to about 1933. The division was based on the type of book and subject matter rather than just date of

CBM MarketWatch

A report of market indicator sales (including % of Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide) by Michael Naiman

Action
#59 FN $400 1.58X
#111 GD- $56 92%
#58 VG- $98 42%
#168 VG+ $87 98%
#267 FN $51 38%

Adventure
#95 VG $133 72%
#267 VG $95 58%

Airboy
#V7#8 VG $30 92%

All Star
#15 VG $280 58%
#37 VG+ $260 85%
#39 GD $1211.09X

Amazing Spider-Man
#4 GD $150 97%
#6 FN $455 1.33X
#9 VG $125 76%
#12 VF $476 1.29X
#13 FN $290 1.59X
#14 VG $370 1.23X
#15 VF $422 93%
#22 VF $208 1.09X
#25 FN $82 94%
#39 VG $42 84%
#50 VF $406 1.30X
#52 FN $27 1.10X
#57 FN $21 86%
#65 VF $42 1.01X
#74 FN+ $30 1.69X
#90 VF+ $32 79%
#91 VF+ $18 57%
#110 VF+ $19 83%
#115 VF+ $25 1.12X
#116 VF $25 1.12X
#119 VF+ $38 1.09X
#124 VF+ $37 1.29X
#129 VF+ $140 1.16X
#135 VF $23 64%

Apache Kid
#16 FN $23 96%

Aquaman
#50 NM $69 1.25X
#51 NM $41 75%

Archie
#11 GD $35 61%
#13 VG $139 1.21X
#18 GD $45 79%

Atom
#1 VG $66 49%

Avengers
#2 FN $152 94%
#4 VG $300 1.05X

Baffling Mysteries
#17 FN+ $72 1.09X

Batman
#9 GD $350 1.08X
#16 GD $350 73%
#17 VF- $1,500 1.30X
#52 VG $100 Guide
#100 VG $275 56%
#173 FN $17 93%

Battlefront
#1 VG+ $50 90%

Brave and Bold
#36 VG- $22 28%
#42 VG $25 42%
#43 VG $33 50%
#44 VG $25 49%

Captain America
#100 VF $148 59%

Captain Marvel Adv
#16 VF $600 1.17X
#18 VF- $400 32%

Captain Marvel Junior
#3 VG $200 95%
#5 VG $150 79%

Daredevil
#1 VF $2,426 1.76X
#2 FN $157 1.24X

Dark Mysteries
#20 FN $81 69%

Detective
#66 VG $400 60%
#87 VF $700 1.25X
#230 VG $80 73%

Eerie
#4 FN $150 91%

Fantastic Four
#12 GD $125 1.20X
#27 VF $109 95%
#28 VF $144 78%
#29 VF $76 92%
#48 VF $510 80%
#50 VF $79 41%

Fight
#28 VF $200 1.21X

Flash
#22 VG $250 74%
#64 GD $71 96%
#224 NM $10 71%

Flyboy
#1 FN $48 86%

Gunsmoke Western
#50 VG+ $22 1.18X

Haunted Thrills
#14 FN $61 1.05X

Hulk
#1 FN $3,201 1.78X
#2 VG $250 69%
#3 VG $184 78%
#4 FN $391 1.18X
#118 VF- $16 66%

Ibis the Invincible
#3 FN $186 87%

Iron Man
#1 VG $56 70%
#2 FN $30 74%
#3 FN $27 1.32X
#4 FN $27 1.65X
#5 VF+ $25 64%
#6 FN $25 1.83X
#7 FN $24 1.76X
#9 FN $14 1.03X
#10 FN $14 1.03X
#10 VF+ $23 71%

Jimmy Olsen
#7 FN $91 91%
#14 FN $72 Guide

JoJo
#17 GD $100 2.04X

Journey into Mystery
#78 FN $65 92%

Justice League of America
#7 FN $81 99%
#8 FN $70 85%
#9 FN $107 1.30X
#17 VF+ $135 1.18X

Kid Colt Outlaw
#101 VG- $24 3.75X
#103 VG $15 2.34X

Little Archie Mystery
#1 VG+ $10 45%

Lois Lane
#13 VG- $24 71%
#29 VF $50 53%
#40 VF $41 86%

Marvel Spotlight
#28 NM- $16 62%
#29 NM- $16 78%

Master
#23 FN $1,100 1.29X

More Fun
#75 FR $113 Guide
#104 FN+ $350 1.38X

Night Nurse
#4VF $45 94%

Racket Squad
#16 FN $30 Guide

Rawhide Kid
#18 GD+ $52 4.16X

Return of the Outlaw
#6 VF+ $20 85%

Richie Rich Money World
#1 NM $39 64%

Showcase
#38 VG $37 47%
#43 VF $129 41%

Startling Terror Tales
#10 VG $41 30%

Strange Adventures
#5 VG $66 51%

Strange Tales
#97 FN+ $250 1.95X
#99 NM $160 Guide

Superman
#11 FN $500 79%

Tales of Suspense
#35 VF- $145 95%

Tales to Astonish
#59 FN $45 92%

Tippy Teen
#21 NM- $23 96%

Top Comics-Lassie
#1 NM $15 1.5X

Top Comics-Zorro
#1 NM $15 83%

Tuff Ghosts
#1 VG+ $22 92%
#41 NM $26 1.3X

Two-Fisted Tales
#39 VF $70 76%

Two-Gun Kid
#56 VG- $20 2.73X
#64 VG $18 3.6X
#67 VG $19 3.8X

Wonder Woman
#67 VG $70 1.17X
#72 GD $89 2.97X
#105 VG+ $394 2.49X

World's Finest
#179 NM- $21 51%
#208 NM- $21 1.14X

X-Men
#1 GD $495 89%
#15 FN $76 93%
#54 VF- $36 63%

...ublication, thus the dates are a good guide but ...t totally accurate. I guarantee that you will be ...ized at all of the entries in the Victorian ...ection, which was based heavily on Doug's ...lection. There are new historical articles and ...ew guide listings for each section—and lots of ...nal pictures. Along with the third essay on ...odern books, I think these three articles present ...he best concise history of comics in America ...very published.

They will also start a buying spree of the early comics. It has always been the case that once lists are published and prices are estimated, that people become more interested in collecting that material. Soon there will be buyers looking for books they never knew existed, and the prices will go up, up, up! In fact, this has already started happening because the collectors discuss these books via computer interest groups.

More and more people are understanding that the history of comic books in America involved some great early books. One of the most popular groups is the 11" x 17" **oblong reprint books** published for about 20 years starting in 1902. There are close to two dozen Buster Brown books, where one page reprints the top half of a Sunday tear sheet and the next page reprints the bottom half. These books were published on nice paper with blank backs, and you often see

the pages for sale on eBay. The cover was made of cardboard and was easily bent and/or torn, without damaging the interior pages. Heavily worn copies of most of the "oblong" comic reprint books have been selling for about $100, with those in nicer condition being very rare and commanding a significant premium. VF/NM copies of the Buster Brown oblong painting comic books recently sold for $1,000 each. Pages from one of the books usually sell for about $5-$10, depending on the title. Poor Li'l Mose, Little Nemo, and a couple of others will often bring $25-$50 per page, and $1,000 and up for an entire book even in Poor to Fair condition if the wear is only to the cover. These books are genuinely rare, and if the demand ever grows, the prices could go through the ceiling! It should be noted that last books published in this series are generally more rare than the first books published. Most collectors of these books like all early comic character memorabilia.

The 11" x 14" early **comic sheet music** covers have been selling fast because of the beautiful large images. Post cards haven't increased in value very much because they were published in such large numbers. Dolls and toys are very popular and collected by non-comic specialists as well, and most Yellow Kid dolls in top condition are now pushing $1,000 and up. The Yellow Kid ten pin set in its box, the only example known, was reported to have sold recently for $10,000. Items that cross over into other collecting groups (e.g., dolls, toys, tobacco, etc.) usually sell for more.

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Wonder-Con has come and gone once again. Other than a couple of glitches on the part of the event organizers during set-up it was a nice show. Rest assured that the comic book back issue market is alive and well. Only one problem, there seemed to be a consensus on the part of both dealers and collectors that there was a **lack of quality material** readily available for purchase or viewing. It was thought to be due to the fact that the new Overstreet Price Guide was not yet available. I was told this by a few dealers, vest-pocket speculators and collectors alike. Books that were available were readily snapped up in all grades. It seems there was a little bit of something for everyone. I witnessed many dealers snapping up stacks and stacks of lower grade Silver Age, stocking up for the upcoming convention season.

I didn't indulge myself with any tremendous comic books of note for resell but I was able to make one fantastic purchase for my own personal collection. I was given the offer to buy eight of the original **Marvelmania posters** from 1970, five black and white posters signed by Jack Kirby, along with the limited edition signed/numbered lithographs of Dr. Doom and the Fantastic Four from the early nineties. I have been looking for these items at shows and on eBay for quite a while and could not pass up the opportunity to purchase them. No poker face here, Phil knew he had me reeled in, and even though it was kind of expensive to purchase as a lot, I had no room to complain when given the option of possibly having to get caught up in a bidding war on eBay. I could not pass them up. One of the great things about this business and hobby is you can always find something really cool to buy.

I noticed a few of the new CGC converts from the area scouring the aisles and digging through the boxes of inexpensive books staring with great intensity wondering if they have a 9.4, 9.6 or 9.8 in their hands. Looking and asking for some reassurance on these diamonds in the rough. All they needed was that beautiful plastic slab and those magic numbers to come up for them. It is just like Christmas every time a new box of graded books comes in. I recently received a box containing an AS-M #1 that received a staggering 1.0!!! Not bad, I was hoping for a 1.5 but you have to take the good with the bad and Keep On Trucking. At least I stayed somewhere in the positive on it. There are a couple of dealer and collector friends of mine who like to bet on the grades we will get on certain items—it is always fun to see who is paying for the next round of sushi or pints. Good clean fun.

A **Few Sales:** Amazing Fantasy #15 VG- $2200; Amazing Spider-Man #100 VF- $150, #9 F- $600, #14 CGC 8.5 White pages $2500, #14 CGC 9.0 Cream to Off-White pages $3500, #16 F+ $190, #39 F/VF $100, #50 F+ $190, #96 VF $60, Batman #20 VG- $250, #67 CGC 8.5 White pages $400, Space Squadron #5 VF $275, All Star #49 CGC 6.5 Off-White pages $500, #55 CGC 6.5 Off-White pages $500, Mystic V2 #2 CGC 8.0 Off-White pages $1100; X-Men #94 VF- $450, Venus #5 CGC 7.0 $275, #6 CGC 8.0 $375, #7 G/VG $70; Fantastic Four #27 VF $100, #28 VF $175, Flash #51 $200; Daredevil #10 VF/NM $125, Butter Boy versus the Donuts $43, Sub-Mariner #17 VG/FN $275, #20 VG/F $275.

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What a great time to be in the hobby! All the indicators suggest that this is gonna be a **great summer** for comic enthusiasts. There appears to be increased acceptance of comic-based licenses by Hollywood and the movie-going public. There is growing popularity of modern comics, with such hits as Wolverine, Origin, Sojourn, Dark Knight, Ultimate Spider-Man, Amazing Spider-Man (new series), the Ultimates. The market for modern books hasn't seen this kind of heat in at least seven years! Plus, record prices are being realized almost daily, for books from every decade! (But who could have foreseen such outrageous prices paid for "new" books, such as $1,000 for a signed Origin #1, or perhaps $1,595 for the recent Amazing Spider-Man #36 in CGC 10.0?)

More fans join the hobby each week, coming from the coin collecting field and other areas. There is a notable increase in demand from outside the USA, particularly from the UK and Canada. This just takes more of "our" copies out of circulation in the domestic market, and in most cases to never return! With record attendance at Mega-Con, and a general sense of excitement that the hobby has lacked in recent years, there is little doubt that the summer convention season will see a massive enthusiasm injection.

Demand for **DC cover production artwork** continues to grow, along with demand for comic-book artwork in general. A few **sample sales** include: World's Finest #217 Hand-Colored cover $150; Lois Lane #92 Approval Cover $151, Our Army At War #239 Four-Color Separation $123, Superman #271 Hand-Colored Cover $150, Brave & Bold #112 Hand-Colored Cover $150.

Some **Sales of vintage comics** include: Donand Duck FC #408 GD/VG $49, Disney Vacation Parade #1 GD+ $53, Walt Disney's Comics & Stories #140 GD/VG $49, Amazing Spider-Man #121 VG $50; Superboy #202 NM-(double-cover) $43.

A few **modern Sales:** Batman #426-429 set NM $31; Ultimate Spider-Man #2 (web-swinging cover) NM+ $70; Spider-Man #36 (new series) NM $20, Origin #1 NM+ $55.

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I'd first like to thank all my mail order and convention customers for making this another great year thus far. I have recently concluded my **2002 catalog sales** and was very pleased with the sales. The majority of sales were of low to mid grade 1950s Atlas comics, I also sold a lot of the Warren titles with Creepy and Eerie doing the best. The best selling DC title was Wonder Woman and the best selling Marvel was Spider-Man. I recently set up at the Wonder Con and I had good sales. The overall attendance seemed a little down and so were my sales there. Sales have been good across the board but Silver Age still rules the convention market.

Lower priced ($5-$40 range) comics were the bulk of my catalog sales. Higher priced items were the mainstay of the conventions. The only **CGC books** I have sold were on eBay, the prices were good but not great. Horror comics are cold and probably list too high in the Overstreet Price Guide. Westerns have made a pretty good comeback, but only certain titles are good sellers. War, Crime & Teen titles are still steady sellers and again only certain titles move fast. Overall, the year 2002 is off to a good start, considering all

the uncertainty of recent times. Some sale of note are:

Golden Age: Marvel Mystery #88 VG- $425, ...k Cat #4 FN+ $105; All American #101 VG ...0, Pirate Comics #4 GD/VG $26; Camp Comics #9 GD/VG $80; Marvel Mystery #87 VG/FN $575, Suspense Comics #6 GD+ $250, Captain Marvel #115 VG/FN $65, #118 VG/FN $65, #145 VG/FN $57, Archie #29 GD+ $50; Speed #41 GVG $60, Frankenstein Comics #4 FN- $110, Black Terror #25 VG- $75, Wings #100 VG $50, Zoot #4 FA/GD $75, Four Favorites #21 FN+ $120, Super Mystery #5 #2 VF- $160, Shadow V8 #6 FN/VF $220, Wow Comics #11 GD+ $72; Giant Comics Edition #4 FA $47; Adventure Comics #45 GD/VG $360

Atomic Age: Strange Worlds #4 GD/VG $68; Astonishing #11 FN/VF $130; Dennis the Menace giant #15 FN/VF $15, Weird Science-Fantasy #23 FN $90, Spellbound #7 FN $95, Superboy #14 FA/GD $60, Mystic #57 VG $55; Uncanny Tales #26 FN $120; Donald Duck FC #223 VG $88, Li'l Abner #74 VG $28; #95 FN $60, Journey into Unknown Worlds #1 (#36) GD+ $250, Venus #5 FN- $118, Weird Mysteries #3 VG/FN $200; Riot #2 VG- $32; Mystery Tales #32 FN+ $50, Lone Ranger #1 FN $255

Silver Age: Strange Tales #101 VG/FN $140, Tales to Astonish #9 FN $175; Sgt. Fury #1 FR $80, Fantastic Four #3 FR $100; My Greatest Adventure #34 FN+ $38, #81 VF/NM $150; Amazing Spider-Man #88 VF+ $70; G I. Combat #110 NM $38, Tales to Astonish #3 FN- $160; Journey into Mystery #66 VF- $160, Strange Tales #89 CGC VG/FN $340, Showcase #55 VF $150, Aquaman #26 NM- $55; Avengers #5 VG/FN $65, Harvey #1 CGC NM $355; Wonder Woman #159 NM- $104, Hawkman #5 VF/NM $120, Amazing Spider-Man #100 CGC VF $154

Magazines, etc.: Mars Attack portfolio $40; Eerie #68 VF/NM $20, Ad3 FN $14, Creepy #38 VF/NM $30, #62 VF $16, #139 VF/NM $10, Fantagor #2 VF 1st $28, Skull #1 1st FN/VF $32, Heavy Metal 8/82 NM $15, Witzend #8 FN $30, Frantic V2 #1 VG/FN $18, Snafu #1 VG- $35, Comics Journal #148 NM $4, Unknown World of Sc -fi #1 NM $16, Savage Tales V1 #1 NM $125

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Yesterday, a small plane crashed into a 30-story building in Italy. Naturally, most people, myself included, initially thought this was terrorism. Before September 11th, few would have assumed that, but our perceptions have changed since then. I began to think of my perceptions of many things in life, and one of them was comics.

I don't read comics much anymore, really have not for years. Time constraints are a big factor, but I also must admit, most newer books don't hold my interest, and I like reading the older comics more for nostalgia than due to the actual content of the story and/or art. I know many in my age range who feel the same way (around 35 to 55 years old), in fact we/they like reading more ABOUT comics, than the comics themselves. I believe some of this is due to age, new things become old. Some of this feeling, though, is also because of our perceptions and expectations.

Many of us are in a certain mindset due to our upbringing, and the times we were raised in formed our paradigms. It took me years to accept and appreciate the art and stories from comics from the '30s and '40s. I was of the opinion for the longest time that they were inferior to books from the '60s and '70s.

As I grew older, and more experienced, my perceptions changed. I know there are many reasons why I don't generally enjoy many books produced today (again, there are quite a few I DO like), most are valid, according to my reasoning, but one that I know is not valid, is that I just have a perception of super-hero comics being the way they were from the late '60s and early '70s. Also, I am probably a little jaded and plain old tired of the "super-hero"—always the same retread plots, same old, worn, soap-opera characters.

It seems the American public has similar sentiments, why else would sales be down so dramatically over the last 30 years? Prices have increased in real terms, factoring inflation, but **profit margins are thinner** for the publisher, witness Marvel's Chapter 11 in previous years.

The publishers seem to be deriving **more money from movies** and merchandising in the recent past than from comic sales. Today's writers and artists are very talented, maybe more so than in the past, but I wouldn't argue that point, one way or the other, so it can't be the quality of the product. Sure, the Internet, computer games and TV have been a factor—but why are there millions of readers in Japan, and Europe, and so few here? I am convinced our perceptions, and attitudes toward comics in America are an overriding reason.

Our country's history regarding comics is different than those of other countries, and it is reflected in our meager sales and interest here. Comics here were for many years largely promoted as children's **junk literature**, and at one point in the mid '50s were being blamed as the cause of juvenile delinquency! The Batman TV show in the mid '60s only reinforced comics as no more then casual, throw-away material. If it's true that 90% of everything is junk, then comics are only following an old rule, but then why is TV so popular? And when we look at today's sales figures remember that there is more than DOUBLE the population in the country today, as compared to comics sales in their heyday when sales were routinely four to ten times what they are today.

There is change, but it seems to me that as long as the public views comics as children's junk reading, then the industry will never experience the success it enjoyed decades ago, which is too bad since if even 90% is garbage (like everything else in pop culture) then we have 10% of great material out there. Enough to keep me busy, if only I can alter my perception.

From a **back issue sales** standpoint this trend can't be good in the long term. Fewer readers today means fewer collectors tomorrow. The best material will hold its value, a lot of the peripheral stuff will lose value. Probably the best, most important in-demand comics will continue to increase in value, but the more-common, low-grade reading copies may lose a substantial portion of their worth, as fewer collectors pursue them.

I already see this happening at many so-called comic cons, which are really a mix of comics and many related and non-related items. Who knows? While the trend seems to be favorable to comics collecting, times and culture do change, and while the real key books will always have value, some of the fringe books may one day fall out of favor. I'll continue to pursue my personal interests whatever the case may be.

Sales of **higher grade** (especially CGC) comics just seem to continue to set new records, almost monthly! When prices go up too far, and too fast, I get a little concerned. Maybe it's just my nature, but in my short life, and through my limited studies, I have seen this lead to too many downturns. I will be at the Philly Con this Mother's Day weekend, since my mom and wife will be away, so I will report on that next month 'Til then, have fun.

Here are a few **sales** I made recently: Amazing Spider-Man #4 7 5 $700; Amazing Spider-Man Annual #6 9 2 $61; Lois Lane #61 9 4 $155, #111 9 0 $27, Superman #100 5 0 $338, Wonder Woman #82 8.5 $480; Tales to Astonish #63 7 5 $45; Action #268 8 5 $95, Avengers #1 7.0 $662; Detective #369 8 5 $39; Brave and the Bold #78 9 2 $95; JLA #68 9 0 $45, Marvel Team-Up Annual #1 9.0 $46

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We have just gone through one of our **busiest quarters** in two to three years. The most notable thing has been a Golden/Silver Age collection we uncovered. Although Low Grade, all had exceptional Off-White to White pages, or better-page quality. Many items from this "Alberta" collection did quite well, as all were original owner copies, and all were unrestored. We are awaiting the return from **CGC** of the Batman #1, Avengers #1 and X-Men #1 from this collection. The demand for **unrestored Golden Age** seems very strong, especially on books with nice page quality. Low Grade is actually preferred by many of our recent buyers.

We look forward to another batch from the "Alberta" collection in the coming months. There was a lot of interest in Master Comics #1-6, the large oversized issues. These rarely show up in any condition, thus brought good prices. The buyer of #2, 5, 6 and 8 was a high-grade

collector who just could not find them in any grade, thus settled for these lower graded, but un-restored examples These remain under-valued and well worth seeking out

The **1942/43 Timely** 132-page Annuals (B&W, and in larger magazine size) opened a lot of eyes, and yet I feel the buyer got a bargain These Annuals rarely show up in ANY condition, and most dealers and collectors alike have never seen an example. I have never seen these at a major auction house, and expect if they ever showed would set new record prices I feel they are a bargain at double current Guide levels! My copy of the Captain America #NN (1942, 132-Page Giant Annual) contains material from Marvel Mystery #33 and Captain America #18. My copy of the Marvel Mystery #NN (1943, 132-Page Giant Annual) contains material from Marvel Mystery #41 and Captain America #22 Overstreet lists CA Annual as having same contents as Marvel Mystery Annual! (lists that it contains MM #33 and CA #22) BUT we had BOTH ANNUALS and both have TOTALLY different contents! THUS our two annuals might BOTH be VARIANT EDITIONS and might just be the ONLY existing copies with Variant contents—perhaps the original Overstreet listing was incorrect! Perhaps some of the other few owners of these two items, can let us know what contents their copies have!

We have bought & sold a lot of **CGC graded** comics in recent months, and the demand seems endless The trend is to buy the single highest-grade copy, or as close as possible. Buyers seem to prefer mainstream Marvel and DC super-hero books over the scarcer Oddball titles Most of these buyers already have average copies in their collections, but want exceptional copies of the nostalgic favorites, for display and investment purposes

On the flip side, we have found low-grade reading copies of most **Pre-1970** comics consistently are in demand and bring over Guide prices We still see relentless demand for most Marvel & DC from 1969-1974. Also for 1962-1964 Marvel in any condition

Everyone is anxious to see the **new Overstreet**, which I think has set a new record for lateness. It remains to be seen how Overstreet will handle pricing of 9 4 comics, in the wake of record CGC prices The VF/NM 9 0 copies of 1970 and older comics, are selling for NM 9.4 Overstreet prices! I feel if Overstreet changed the NM 9 4 column to VF/NM 9 0, prices would be more accurate. We all know that TRUE and strictly-graded NM 9 4 copies consistently sell for multiples Thus, if 9 0 was the top grade for 1970 and older, it would be Sky is the Limit/Market Value on all higher grades, which is the reality of the market. Those who believe strictly-graded NM 9.4 copies sell at Guide prices are the big losers.

I expect the Spider-Man movie to be a blockbuster and demand to climb even higher on all vintage items. I also feel that X-Men #143-200 are loaded with great "undiscovered" minor key issues and are very under-valued, when compared to the high priced #94-142. Hopefully the new Guide will adjust this discrepancy.

Warren, Skywald and all other **Horror mags and comics** continue to be in high demand We find that warehouse copies of Warren mags are nearly depleted and expect that supplies will be gone faster than most dealers and collectors expect It should be noted that most warehouse copies only grade a strict VG+ to FN+ range, thus VF or better copies are in short supply. Strict NM copies of most Warren mags are near non-existent If CGC ever begins to slab mags, these will be very hot items

We still do extremely well filling in holes in endless **want lists**. Always our "bread & butter" Ordinary $3-$20 comics in G to FN/VF from all publishers are selling very well Our most requested companies in order of demand are Marvel, DC, Warren, Charlton, Dell, Archie, Gold Key, Alternatives, Harvey & Dennis the Menace

Those who cannot sell these other publishers simply do not have a good enough selection It is great to see that even amid all the "investment" hysteria, the hard-core reader/collectors are well represented. We see it as a good sign for the long-term strength of this wonderful hobby of ours

Recent Sales (all prices in USA Funds, rounded to nearest dollar). All Star Squadron #1 (CGC, 9.6) $49; Amazing Spider-Man #1 CGC VG+ $2400, #124 1st Man-Wolf 9 4 CGC $188, #180 Green Goblin-c/s CGC 9 6 $79, #189 Byrne-a Man-Wolf-a CGC 9 6 $69, #238 1st Hobgoblin Canadian newsstand VARIANT Edition with the single 75 cents cover price! NM+ 9.6 $159, #238 USA edition CGC 9 8 $250, #239 CGC 9 8 US $139, Arrow #2 cover split at spine and detached $196, Avengers #61 CGC 9.4 $100, Avengers Annual #7 CGC NM+ 9.6 $99; Batman #3 cover split at spine and detached $382, Captain America 132-Page Giant Annual Gerber-8 Rarity Timely1942 VG $7,500, Capt Marvel #2 1968 CGC 9 6 $143, Chamber of Darkness #1 CGC 9 4 $307; Daredevil #168 CGC 9 2 $121, Defenders #10 Thor vs Hulk CGC NM 9 4 $112, Demon #3 (DC-Kirby) CGC 9 8 $102, Donald Duck #222 Rare 3-Pack Only Whitman edition VG $330, Eclipse #4 (1973 Fanzine with 3 pages Pre-Pro Byrne art) FN $75, Frankenstein #1 1/73 CGC 9.4 $157, G.I. Combat #200 CGC 9 8 $65; G I Joe (Marvel) #1 CGC 9 6 $75, #11, 12, 13, 14 CGC 9.8 $59 each, #5, 8, 9 (Marvel) CGC 9 6 $45 each, #23 (Marvel) CGC 9 6 $52; Iron Man & Sub-Manner #1 CGC 9 6 $675, Marvel Mystery #2 1939 no back cover, cover detached, #4 cover split at spine and detached, #5 1940 cover split at spine and detached = 3 issues sold as a set for $4000, Marvel Mystery 132-Page Giant Annual (Timely) Gerber-10 Rarity 1943 GD+ $7,500, Master Comics #1 1940 VG but partial split spine $666, #2 1940 GVG but partial split spine $255, #3 1940 VG but partial split spine $300, #4 1940 GVG but partial split spine $105, #5 1940 Gerber-8 scarcity VG $366, #6 1940 VG $265, #8 cover split at spine and detached $200, Not Brand Echh #1 CGC 9 4 $360, Sensation Comics #1 1942 G but with centerfold missing $1124; Sonic the Hedgehog #1/4 (number one quarter) 1992 8-page color giveaway comic NM $31; Special Marvel Edition #15 (1st Shang Chi) CGC 9 4 $142, Stuntman #1 1946 Kirby VG $203; Supergirl #1 1974 CGC 9.6 $175, Superman #3 front cover only G $102; Thor #180 Adams-a CGC 9 6 $175; Thrilling Comics #68 1948 Frazetta-a Schomberg-c GD/VG $109; TBG #190 later renamed Comics Buyers Guide or CBG July 8/1977 the Bonus section to this issue is a 52-page back issue catalogue in 3 sections from Mile High Comics listing the original Edgar Church collection VG/FN $115; Transformers #1 (Marvel) CGC 9.6 $105, #5 (Marvel) CGC 9.8 $127, Wanted #12 (Canadian Ed) VG Alcatraz Prison-c/s 1948 $71, #13 (Canadian Ed) Heroin Drug propaganda and hallucination story 1948 FN $35; Uncanny X-Men #137 CGC 9 8 $195, #244 CGC 9.8 $101, Uncanny X-Men Annual #1 CGC 9.4 $300, Annual #3 CGC 9 6 $72

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WonderCon 2002 marked the first year with Comic-Con Int'l (nee San Diego Comic-Con) staff at the helm and, for the most part, it was a well run and well-attended event The staff was helpful and knowledgeable, making this year's set-up MUCH easier than previous years The guest list was impressive, though it seems more than a few artists and writers didn't make the trip—and the layout of artists alley made it a little tough to find the ones who did Overall, the dealers room seemed small, and nobody looked overly thrilled with the buying activity (buyers or sellers!)

We, however, had an excellent show, with brisk activity on a wide variety of titles We opted to go with an unusual mix of product this year, and took the bulk of a collection I recently purchased, primarily comprised of **high grade 1960s/'70s/'80s** Archies, Harveys (Richie Rich, mostly), Charlton horror & war titles, Gold Key horror titles and Dell/Gold Key photo covers. Over the course of the weekend, we watched 37 long boxes of comics turn into 17, as collectors bought large stacks of books (more than a few people bought them by the box full). So it seems that there is a healthy market for the odd titles, and second tier publishers—with collectors just waiting for dealers to offer them

Original art also sold very well for us at this show—though most of the activity was confined to covers and splashes, and trade seemed to be the preferred method of payment (at least in part!) We picked up a few new pieces, including Marvel Premiere #6 cover by Mike Ploog, Planet of the Vampires #2 cover by Neal Adams, an X-Men #59 page by Neal Adams, a couple of X-Men #96 pages by Dave Cockrum and an X-Men #105 page by Dave Cockrum. A few of the pieces that we sent off to new homes included a Burne Hogarth Tarzan Sunday, Avengers #100 cover by Jim Starlin, Superboy #198 cover by Nick Cardy and a nice Frazetta figure study from the 1950s

There were rumors floating around that the new folks could be looking to move the show it of Oakland, so this may have been the end of era—but I, for one, look forward to the future of this show, wherever that may be. Northern California is a tremendous market for comics and collectibles, and I would love to see WonderCon grow into the second largest show in the country! I think that a move to San Francisco or San Jose may be just what the show needs to make that happen. Until next time...

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Hello. Been a while since my last report, but man this is a good one. Picked up a **collection in Boston** in January, about 200 books. Some nice Golden Age, and a bunch of high-grade Wonder Womans and Worlds Finest from 1959 to 1964. Well, I played the CGC game and here are the end **results** from eBay (at least the highlights):

First the **Golden Age:** The best books were Action #36 (7.0) $709.77, All Flash Quarterly #3 (6.5) $500; SubMariner #10 (4.0) $481, Superman #1 (7.5) $1,775, #8 (9.0) $5,250, #13 (7.5) $1,275. So it was moving at a solid "Guide" price. Except, of course, the Superman #8 that went over double Guide.

Now to the WOW part. Here is the **Silver Age** part of the sell—are you sitting down? Batman #232 (9.8) $1,400 (15+ times Guide), #187 (9.2) $150 (3X Guide), Our Army at War #164 (8.0) $137.50 (1 3/4X Guide), #177 (9.4) $667.77 (12X Guide). Now for the bulk of the sale it was Wonder Woman #115 (9.2) $1,008, #122 (9.4) $1,005, #127 (9.6) $1,250, #128 (9.4) $1,050, #137 (9.2) $485. The rest of the run went multiples of Guide. Only four of the 44 Wonder Womans did not sell, and all but five of those got 1 1/2 or more times Guide.

And then there were the **World's Finest**—Oh my God! All but two of 40 books sold, and every book went over Guide. Here are some of the best: #129 (9.6) $895, #119 (9.4) $1,350, #134 (9.6) $1,313, #139 (9.4) $1,352.77, #125 (9.6) $1,675, and last a #131 (9.8) $2,050 (Just $50.00 short of 30X Guide).

A lot of fun it was seeing the prices rise, but in a way I feel sorry for all the buyers—aren't comics made for reading? I will say, the person who bought the Sub Mariner #10 did say he would **un-CGC** it so he can read the book.

THE **WONDER CON** REPORT: Well, San Diego pulled it off, but just by the skin of their collective teeth. They have probably the worst customer/dealer service of any show I go to, and they can't have that "San Diego, I'm better than thou" attitude with a smaller show like this. We'll see what they do with it next year, to see if it's even around. But my fantastic base of customers that have come every year were all there. And the show was profitable. I would say the best seller I had at the show was **Sets**—Yes, Sets. What do you do when you get 40 boxes of late '70s thru 1994 books from a private collector—you make sets. I brought about 20 boxes of sets, all priced between 20-50% off Guide, and went home with 12 boxes left. The lower "high grade" books F-VFs on the Silver Age were very slow, but, as always, low grade Silver priced at Guide then 50% off sold Great. Now, for me this was a great show for **original art**. I sold a complete Black Panther Story (issue #8), a nice Frazetta EC page, and a lot of 50-250 dollar pages of Jack "King" Kirby art. Again, a fine weekend of visiting friends from all over. Remember this is Comic Books, have fun!

THE STORY OF AN **X-MEN #94**: There once was an X-Men # 94 that found it's was onto my back board via the collection of the drummer from the group "System of a Down" (Thanks, John). I would grade this a VF+ book. Beauty, but a slight crease 1/32 into the book on the top right corner. Well, me and this book traveled. We went to Boston, New York, Detroit, Chicago, LA (a few times) and maybe eight other shows on the west coast. Oh, we were having a blast seeing all the sights, it was great. I had priced my little book out at only $500. But nobody seemed to want to take it home. So last San Diego show the X-Men #94 decided he wanted to see new sights, so I dropped him down to $400, a fair price, a chance to get out and see the world. He was very disappointed to go home with me, so I told him about the thing called eBay and how he could possibly go international. Well, to give him a chance, I put a small $250 reserve on him, and to my astonishment—he stayed with me. A month later—same thing, $250 and his bags were left in the closet. He was going nowhere. Then a collection came to me from Boston, and those fine books asked this X-Men #94 if it would join them on a trip to Florida to sit in a pretty plastic box with a bright blue label. The X-Men left and a few months later he returned in the pretty box with the pretty, bright blue label. But this time there was a number on that label. Now I have been selling comic books for over 25 years, and am considered a very fair grader by my peers. The X-Men was proud of his number, it was 9.2. Telling the world "Hey, I have white pages, too." This X-Men was so proud of this number he wanted to show the world, so he asked me to use the eBay thing again so everybody would see his 9.2. Well, after seven days of showing off the number, someone paid me $860 for that same X-Men comic. He is, as we speak, on his way to New York to play with his new friends. I myself am glad no one took away my friend at $250 (twice), and since he now has a pretty plastic box with a bright blue label and he has his number, he must be worth that much more. Good Luck, Old Friend, enjoy your new home.

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Keeping the faith, we've watched Marvel's newsstand sales successes and have enjoyed many good reads in their comics. New comics sales have continued to inch up with **Marvel leading the pack**. DC Comics sells fewer copies than Marvel, an average ratio of about 4 to 1 copies of any Marvel comic versus DC's products. That's at our store and may not be universal. That's unfortunate because I enjoy many DC titles. Considering the talent pools of freelance workers and creators with similar styles it's not surprising to me that Marvel and DC turn out comics with similar quality. The Marvelites just don't seem to be aware of that. Or—more importantly—won't make the financial investment in more comics. Let's face it, this may be the "Year of the Marvels," what with the hardcore talent working on many of their comic projects, an increased effort to turn out better merchandise and the biggest blockbuster(s) of all– top-notch movies!

Marvel back issues, with an emphasis on the usual gang of key Silver/Bronze Age Marvel comics are on fire at our store! Prime example—we just completed a comic book trade with a gentleman from England. His Golden Age Superman comics and Fawcett comics in average grade for our late Silver/early Bronze Age Marvel comics. His market for these books is strong. Strong enough to trade off a fairly nice Superman #11 (white paper/spine roll and creasing) for 20-30 cent cover priced Spidey's, Hulks and Avengers. It's a novel trade because it rarely ever happens at that level. We were both satisfied at the conclusion of the deal and we will both make money from that trade.

Recent comic book back issue **Sales**:

Golden Age: All-American Comics #67 FA/GD $55, #91 GD $87; Batman #39 FA $55; Beany & Cecil FC #635 FN $47, Beware #10 (Frazetta cover) FA $65; Blackhawk #20 FN $150, Bob Colt #6 VG $36, Captain Marvel #5 FN- $200, Crusader Rabbit FC #735 VG $62, Don Winslow of the Navy #10 VG/F $50, #40 FN $34; Ellery Queen #2 VG $70; Journey into Unknown Worlds #7 FN- $225, Menace #8 G/VG $45, #10 GD $28, Spy Smasher #1 FN $1,000; Superman #11 VG+ $450; Tom Corbett FC #491 F/VF $40.

Silver Age: Action #266 VG/F $40; Adventure Comics #283 VF- $120, #381 VF $45; Amazing Fantasy #15 G/VG (restored) $1,530; Amazing Spider-Man #1 CGC 8.0 (VF) $9351, #46 VF $65, #62 VF $35, #82 VF- $25; Batman #141 FN $46, #189 FN $21, #204 VF- $14.50; Justice League of America #8 VF+ $180, Not Brand Echh! #1 CGC 9.0 $45, Strange Tales #69 CGC VG/F $70, Sub-Mariner #1 FN $24, Superman #200 NM- $55; Tales To Astonish #22 CGC VG+ $50, X-Men #8 FN+ $90, #9 VF- $158, #10 VF $180, #13 FN+ $81.

Bronze Age: Amazing Spider-Man #108 VF $22, #133 NM $16, #298 NM $30; Mister Miracle #1 VF $33; Spectacular Spider-Man Magazine #1 NM $70, Vampirella #86 NM $18, #88 NM $18, #89 NM $18, #90 NM $18, #100 NM $70, #101 NM $35, #102 NM $35.

Opinions expressed in CBM Market Reports are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Prices vary by location, date of transaction and other factors.

SPECIALTY COMICS

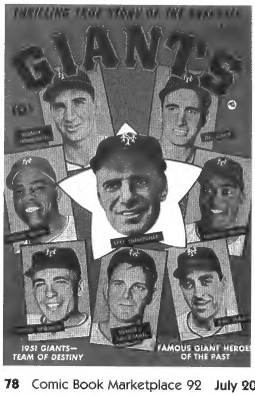
[cont. page 9]

Stanky, whose nickname was "The Brat," recalls that unforgettable season in 1951 as "A great year for baseball." The Giants were 13 1/2 games out of first place on August 12 but tied the Dodgers on the last day of the season. Though the Giants won the special three-game series on Bobby Thomson's immortal three-run homer in the ninth inning, they would fall to the Yankees in the World Series, four games to two.

Stanky 1966 Topps card, from about the time he paid $50 for a copy of his comic.

Stanky was also featured on the photo-cover of Fawcett's *Thrilling True Story of the Baseball Giants* released in 1952. Also on the cover were the portraits of Thomson, Al Dark, Willie Mays, Monte Irvin, Whitey Lockman, Sal Maglie and Manager Leo Durocher.

Stanky was named Manager of the Year (and was also a player) in 1952 with the St. Louis Cardinals. His greatest post-managerial success came in the late '60s through the early '80s at the University of South Alabama in Mobile, Alabama, where in 14 seasons he compiled a record of 488-193. The college's baseball park is named after him.



Also from Fawcett, **Thrilling True Story of the Baseball Giants** (1952).

NOLAN'S NOTEBOOK

[continued from page 14]

DC figured knights were more common in kid's imaginations than Vikings.

Viking Prince ran on the covers of #16, 17, 19 and 21-24, with Silent Knight on #18 and 20. I've always considered Silent Knight by far the title's weakest character—though not really bad—but maybe that is because so much Silent Knight art suffers in comparison to Kubert and Heath, although Heath did beautiful Silent Knight work in #5, 16, and 22.

Robin Hood, which I chronicled in a *CBM* column several years ago, was a public-domain character, so it's no surprise that Quality, DC, Charlton and Magazine Enterprises all jumped in with short-lived regular Robin Hood titles in the mid-1950s because of the hit syndicated television show. Robin Hood's DC debut came in Brave and the Bold #5 (April-May 1956), with Kubert drawing #6 in sensational style before Heath took over for a slick Robin Hood run in #7-15. Never has Robin Hood been better illustrated! As good as the Golden Gladiator was by Heath, his Robin Hood was as good or better—those nine stories also would make a wonderful graphic novel. They hold up beautifully today.

Oddly, DC picked up its Robin Hood Tales title (which ran #7-14) from Quality's *Robin Hood Tales* #1-6 when Everett "Busy" Arnold's fabled company went out of the comic business at the end of 1956. That was indeed an oddity, since DC also published Robin Hood in *Brave and the Bold* well before Quality folded—so you had the strange scenario of a company picking up the rights to a primary title of a character it was already publishing in an anthology!

Robin Hood last appeared in *Brave and the Bold* #15 (Jan 1958), apparently because the company had decided to conclude the *Robin Hood Tales* title with #14 (March-April 1958), a few months before the end of the original syndicated television run.

Brave and the Bold made an original move when it went from three to two stories for #16-22, giving Kubert 12 or 13 pages on Viking Prince. It was unusual for a DC title to run two stories instead of three in the late 1950s, but it made for a year's worth of effective storytelling.

Perhaps my favorite Viking Prince story was in *Brave and the Bold* #10 (March 1957), entitled "Secret of the Feather-Men's Ship." In this story Jon, the Viking Prince, discovers America, rescues an Indian maiden from fierce Native-American warriors, and brings home a feather head-dress. I was nine years old when I first read this, and it really captured my imagination. I remember my third-grade teacher being most impressed when I asked her if there was any chance Vikings beat Columbus to America—and she said it was indeed possible.

Then she just shook her head when I told her I learned it in a comic book!

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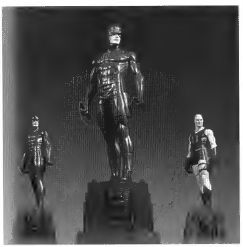
and busts available. Terms such as "**Full-Size Statue**," "**Medium Statue**," "**Mini-Statue**," "**8-Inch Statue**," "**9-Inch Statue**," "**12-Inch Statue**," "**Bust**," "**Mini-Bust**," etc. proliferate. But what do they all mean and how do they relate? Why is the statue of **Character A** so much bigger than the statue of **Character B**, when both characters are the same height in "real life"?

True "scale" is very specific, and is expressed as a ratio, such as **1:8** or **1:6**. What this indicates is the size relationship between the finished statue and the actual "life-size" original subject. Literally translated, 1:6 scale indicates that one-inch measurement on the statue represents six inches of the "life size" original. So, a **12"** (or 1') tall statue represents a **72"** (or **6'**) tall original.

Likewise, in 1:8 scale, one inch represents eight inches, with a 9" tall statue representing a 72" original. An 8" Statue would equate to 1:9 scale, with 8" representing a 72" subject.



Daredevil "Full-Size" and "Mini" statues from Bowen Designs, shown for scale comparison. "Full-Size" is approx. 9" tall (exclusive of base) in **1:8** scale. "Mini" is approx. 6" tall (exclusive of base) in **1:12** scale.

Each statue-producing studio has its own preferred scale to work in.

Most statues labeled as **Full-Size** are actually 1:8 scale (except for Moore Creations, whose full-size statues are rendered in the larger 1:6 or 12" scale), with 1:9 being common for **Medium** (AKA 8") statues and 1:10 or 1:12 scale for **Mini-Statues**.

Busts usually check in at 1:4 (such as Creative License or Legends in 3-Dimensions) or 1:6 (Moore Creations and Diamond Select). **Mini-Busts** (such as Bowen Designs, DC Direct, and Dynamic Forces) are done in 1:8.

So, while you can't set up a romantic display case rendezvous between your 1:6 scale Witchblade statue and your 1:8 scale Captain America statue (unless of course, you have deep psychological issues with women who tower over men), you can mix and match all your like-scaled pieces without your anal-retentive inner child getting into a panic.

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

Back Issue Department!

These issues are available...

#47	Russ Heath, Capt. Storm, Haunted Tank!	$10
#52	Archie, All-Star, Schwartz Part III, Fox	$8
#58	Lost in Space, Weisinger, Basil Wolverton!	$10
#60	Planet Comics & Reed Crandall	$10
#62	Joe Simon, Fighting American, Dobie Gillis	$10
#63	Celebrating Supermanís 60th!	$8
#65	Pre-Code Crime, Bob Kane & more!	$10
#66	Women of the Spirit, Batman & Raven!	$8
#72	Iron Man & Subby, Larry Lieber Part I	$8
#73	Warren Horror, Larry Lieber Part II	$8
#74	Gil Kane, Green Lantern, Gerber Sticker Set #2	$15
#76	Rocky & Bullwinkle, Poe, Wolverton	$8
#79	Blue Beetle, Fred Guardineer, Capt. Action	$8
#80	Special 96-Page EC Tribute issue	$15
#81	Doctor Strange, Iron Man, all Marvel issue!	$10
#83	Magnus, Saturn Girl, Plastic Man	$8

Prices include postage.
Add $2 each for overseas orders.
MD (5%) and MO (6.475%) add sales tax.
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pennies to use these contraptions? I have never heard of anyone else mentioning them, and I've never seen one offered on eBay! Heck! That's how I purchased *Captain America #100, Iron Man #1*...all the issues in 1968 when Marvel was finally breaking out of DC's Clutch Cargo distribution!

Anyway, the walk or ride home with these treasures was another adventure indeed. I cradled them carefully, whether I was riding my bike, walking, whatever. On the way home, I hoped I would not run into any friends or any bullies! I needed to get home with this week's comics intact, with not so much as a nick or crease on them. I loved them that much. After dinner, and just before bath time, I would get lost in the world of Lee and Kirby, Romita and, on a smaller scale, some DC.

After carefully handling the books and reading the adventures, I would pile them, front to back, on my bookshelf. There were no comic bags and boards then. The only clue I had of that was sending in fifty cents for Robert Bell's catalog (a dealer advertising in the late sixties) and receiving a comic bag with his name and address on the flap. You got one bag. Pick your best comic, I guess.

I distinctly remember not being able to find *Spider-Man* #50, #57 or *Fantastic Four* #62 anywhere. Sometimes, you got to the drug store late and that would be the price you would have to pay! No matter how much I looked, I couldn't find them. I don't know how many places I looked, and I don't know how much money I tossed in those frickin' dispensing machines hoping to find them. Being eleven years old limited the jurisdiction I could travel, but my bike took me many places that housed used and new books. I was still unable to find them, until many months later. This was when continuity was in vogue at Marvel, and I lay many nights awake wondering how Spidey got his memory back, or how Reed Richards survived the Negative Zone!

Being the child that I was, I would seriously reflect during those days if something might be wrong with me. All my friends would read the books, roll them up, put them in their back pocket, and take off down the road on their bikes. I would actually wince when I saw this and get into heated arguments with them. "For crying out loud, you just paid twelve cents for it! How could you treat your comic like that?!?!" My friends would shrug me off, take their index finger and make a little circle, just adjacent to their left ear. There were no backing boards, no comic bags, no price guides, no mylars, no grading systems...there was nothing to back me up. Nothing to show my friends that I was not insane—that the condition of your comic book was everything. I just had this feeling as I was taking these books off the spinner rack, twice a week, no matter what store I was buying them in, that it mattered that the cover was square! It mattered that a white border was not showing on the left side of the cover! It mattered that you should take the comic without the arrival date if you had the choice, and condition wasn't a factor in the decision! Boy, would I get laughed at!

This was the period between 1967 and 1969. I slowly left comics in 1974 for girls, the prom, the first car...just like a million other guys. I sold my collection long ago, and started to try and get it back after marriage and grown children.

Which brings me to the present! 2002!!

I was on eBay last night looking for a copy of *Fantastic Four #55* in decent shape for under two grand, and there I saw it...on eBay a comic book dealer (whose name I won't mention) had a slabbed *Spider-Man* #36 (volume two), graded 10.0!! WOW!! (The World Trade Center Edition...you know...the black cover?...The book that just came out two months ago??...With a print run of like...FIFTEEN BILLION?) You know which one I'm talking about, kids? The book you couldn't find at your comic shop or convention for less than five dollars? Yeah...that's the one I'm talking about!!

The dealer went on to state that he went straight to the distributor, with his white gloves on, and picked out his book. Forget his comic book store. You won't find a 10.0 there! By God, there are fingerprints on those copies! Then, without breathing on it, and avoiding all his bullies and friends, he managed to make it to his mailbox and send it to CGC, where they gave him a 10.0 for his efforts!! Then the carnival barker basically stated that you don't have a 10.0 *Spidey* #36, and you never will, unless you bid on his. (In the famous words of Dave Barry, "I am not making this up!")

Now...to all my friends from 1967...you know who you are...Curtis, Dave, Ron...I haven't seen you since junior high, but I know you're out there...and guess what?! The high bid for this book is currently at six hundred and one dollars for his two month old *Spider-Man* comic book! (Never mind the high bidder has only six feedbacks with a couple of negatives. I'm not into details!) NYAHHH!!!

To Russ, and Mike, and formerly Gary...I dedicate this observation to you, and to all the great readers of *Comic Book Marketplace*...the ones that are in the know...nothing really matters after 1975!! (Except those Gladstone reprints!) (Just an opinion.) Thanks for lending me your ear.

Dan Brady

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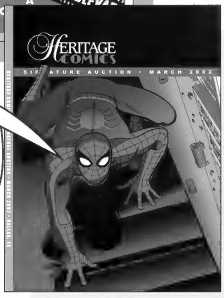

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